





NORMAN ABBEY;

A TALE OF

SHERWOOD FOREST.

VOL. III.

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A TALE

OF

SHERWOOD FOREST.

BY A LADY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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NORMAN ABBEY.

CHAPTER I.

In each low wind, methinks a spirit calls,
And more than echoes walk along the walls.

POPE'S ELOISA.

I have heard
(And from men learned) that before the touch
(The common, coarser touch) of good or ill,
That oftentimes a subtler sense informs
Some spirits of the approach of things to be.

PROCTOR'S MIRANDOLA.

THE old housekeeper, on her return from her lady's apartment, sat brooding over past sorrows in that undefined sort of listless contemplation, better known by the familiar appellation of a brown study, than by any verbose description.

Her past life, with its glimmering lights and crossing shadows, flitted before her “like a dream that is told;” and nought of the future could she

discover, save the dim perspective of that “ land from whose bourne no traveller returns.”

“ Heigho !” said she, with a heavy sigh, as sitting on her arm-chair opposite the little Gothic window which commanded a view of the woodland scenery, she watched the rays of the setting sun falling aslant upon the variegated foliage, and deepening its autumnal tint.

“ Ohon ! it’s a weary thing to see anes sell drapping awa’ by inches like the leaves o’ autumn ; but it is na the thing to be maundering about neither ; it’s a matter o’ necessity ; we maun a’ drap aff at the fa’ o’ the leaf. Aweel ! aweel !” continued she, endeavouring to shake off the melancholy thoughts which were stealing over her, “ Heaven be praisit ! there are things that bide for ever an’ aye. Time canna dunt ’em, nor the winter’s wind whistle them awa’ ; but they’re green an’ caller frae ane year’s end to anither. Yon braw ivy, now, flaughterin’ aboon the window sill, suld teach me a better lesson than to be doited at the dispensations of Providence, wha aye kens what is best for us, an’ wha testifieth, by his written word, that these light tribulations, (though I canna but say they’re a great weight just nou,)” added the simple old woman, “ wark out for us an exceeding weight of glory !”

Mattie kept fortifying her mind with such fragments of Scripture as she had learnt in her younger days, together with sundry scraps of morality, and treasures of consolation drawn from less hallowed sources, till she had almost forgotten the painful tenor of her interview with Lady Fontayne, so different from what she had before experienced. Mattie rose, and taking up a loose fagot or two from the hearth, set herself to kindle a fire as fast as she could.

“ The wind’s rising, an’ it gets o’er cauld at neeghts,” said she, with an involuntary shiver. “ Auld blude rins slow to be sure,” added she, correcting her hasty observation ; “ but the Lord be gude unto us ! I dinna like that wild music ;” and Mattie opened the casement as she spoke. “ Mercifu’ Heaven !” ejaculated she, as a flood of melody rushed through the aperture, “ there’s death riding on the wings o’ the wind ! Spirits are abroad, I ken by this token, an’ this is the gude ane that aye comes frae the gate o’ Paradise.”

A slight noise, as of approaching footsteps, caused her to turn round hastily.

“ Gude, my lord, is it yoursel or your wraith ?” said Mattie, in consternation, for Lord Evelyn indeed stood before her, more like a spectral shade, than a living animated being ; his hair

hanging in dishevelled locks over a brow pale as alabaster, his light eye flashing with a wild unearthly glare, and his features convulsed by some strong internal emotion! “Heaven sauve us!” cried Mattie, with a look of despair, “the bairn’s gane clean gyte. Winna ye speak, my lord? speak ane word to me for mercy’s sake!” and she laid her hand impressively on his. It was cold and clammy.

“Mattie,” said he, in a solemn tone, “I have seen the black ghost, as you call it; that fearful apparition, which has haunted our house ever since the memory of man!”

“The Lord hae mercy upon us!” cried Mattie, lifting up her hands; “sae ye hae kent it at last!—wae’s me! it bodes nae gude. But ye may be mista’en,” said she, endeavouring to appear composed. “Mony things hae wiled folks in the gloamin’ that turnit out to be nougat after a’: ye’ll may be hae kent a flaughterin’ shadow, like the skirt of a cloud—eh?” inquired she, apprehensively.

“Ay, a cloud, a thunder-cloud, or something like it,” said Lord Fontayne; “a dark volume of condensed vapour, coiling itself up into a thick mass, and then rolling out into a thin, subtle fluid as I approached it. There was nothing frightful in the appearance of this untangible

phantom," continued Evelyn, muttering to himself; "no headless trunk, no bloody hand warned me to the fatal spot where some foul crime had been perpetrated; no pale spectre, with a murderous gash in its bleeding side, reproached me for the sin of my ancestors. Would it had assumed any earthly form, any natural semblance! but this black, shapeless, rolling mass of uncertain shadows is yet before my eye. O God! I cannot shut it out," said Evelyn, shuddering, as he closed his eyes with nervous trepidation.

"Ye're right! ye're right!" said the old woman, as she dropped upon her seat. "It's a warning, a death-token sure eneugh! Weel did I ken there was something stirring in the air, for, oh! what a sair lade hae I at my heart! an' there's no denyin' that we hae na a blink o' what's gaen on i' the warld aboon; naebody can threap me out o' *that*."

Lord Fontayne threw himself upon the window-bench, and remained plunged in profound meditation, whilst Mattie rocked herself backwards and forwards, talking at intervals in a low tone, as if unconscious of his presence.

"Waes me! the first time I kent that fearfu' ghaist, God rest his puir saul! he was far awa' in a strange land, an' his banes did na rest in the se-

pulchre o' his fathers. Weel—weel! he was a brave man, an' servit his king an' country mair truly nor—but whar am I roaming? Alack-a-day! young shoots will spring up out of auld cares. But the last time I heard or saw any thing marvellous was whan the puir baron lay on his death-bed; though it was na for him either that the dirge was skreighed. The coronach, as they ca' it in the north countrie, was cried for Sir Walter; an' troth the auld ruined arch made as great a lament as ony Highlander could do for his chief."

" Mattie," said the young lord, as he raised his head with a half-mournful, half-satirical smile curling his upper lip, " I 'm surprised to hear you go on so about ghosts. I thought you did not believe in them."

" I, my lord?" said Mattie, disturbed in her soliloquy. " I dinna mind what I said lang syne. I dinna count my words afore I send 'em out o' my mouth. Was it about idle leasing? Troth, I dinna fash mysel about auld wives' stories at a'. It 's nae weel to believe a' ane hears; but *seeing* 's believing, an' the black ghaist is quite anither affair. Winna ye believe it now yoursel, my lord?"

" It was certainly a very mysterious apparition," returned Evelyn; " and I was too much

shocked—too much taken by surprise, to have any command over my feelings. But it might be only fancy after all," continued he, trying to force a laugh. " But, pray say nothing to my mother about it."

" Not I, indeed ! I ken weel eneugh my leddy wadna like to hear of it. She has na seen it mony 's the day syne, an' I trow has clean forgotten it. I wadna set her thinking o' time gane by," continued she, as Lord Fontayne left the room. " She wadna laugh I 'se warrant her, like the young lord. But he 's amaist scaured out o' his wits, though he 's too proud to own it ; an' no wonner, for the black ghaist is an awsome thing."

On the following morning Evelyn's feet mechanically took the road to Ravenstede.

" I have commenced this day's business with a bad omen," said he ; " there is, certainly, a strife between the Sister Fates in weaving my mortal web. The warp and the woof do not mingle their threads cannily, as Mattie would have it, but are for ever twisting into knots, or running across the uneven surface of my life. The oracle which spoke me fair, I would fain recant to have poor Fancy at my side ; and should I gain all I wish, never can I drive out of my head (which should have learnt wiser things by this time) the evil presages of that dark spectre."

Agitated as Lord Fontayne was by the tumult of youthful passions, and bent on a desperate mission, he could not help pausing upon the brow of a rising hill to cast an admiring glance upon his paternal inheritance, with a very pardonable degree of self-exultation.

“ It is but a wee bit of barren land !” said he ; “ a poor ruin !—a picturesque grouping of crumbling stone and mortar ; and that smooth lake no better than a looking-glass, for the use of the old Abbey, when she dresses her grey head with garlands of fresh ivy, and wimples herself out with those fantastic towers. Yet, I would not exchange it, and its mantle of green woods, for the finest castle and richest barony in the three kingdoms. It is not for money I care,” continued he, looking towards Ravenstede ; “ but these fair lands should never be parted.”

With feelings like these Evelyn passed over the rustic bridge, which formed a rude boundary betwixt the contiguous estates, and walked on till he reached the church-yard we have before described.

Carefully unlatching the little wicket-gate, he stole into the shrubbery, and discerned through an opening arch of evergreens that the young heiress was in the act of ascending the stone steps, with the intention of taking the same path by

which he had entered. A light basket of osier hung upon her arm; in which she was accustomed to carry daily alms to such of her village pensioners as were disabled by sickness, or old age, from attendance at the hall.

She started back a few paces, as the opening gave her a glimpse of Evelyn; but recovering herself instantly, she advanced to meet him with her accustomed gaiety and freedom.

“ My dear cousin,” said she, after a few minutes’ conversation on idle topics, “ what is the matter? You look pale and anxious. Why do we not see you here as formerly? I have a sincere regard for you, and surely we can be *friends*, if not—”

“ Lovers! I suppose you would say?” interrupted Evelyn, in a saddened accent. “ Are you still so resolute—so determined to crush all my hopes, Bertha? You think me only a boy!—Well, be it so. *That* is a fault of no long standing, yet it will not see my *love* out. Would to Heaven it were the only obstacle! How cheerily would pass the heavy-footed hours! What a stimulus should I have for every laudable exertion! How I would wait for you—watch over you—pray for you!”

“ But you forget, dear Evelyn,” cried Bertha, interrupting him, and blushing as she spoke,

“ that I love another!—O! so much, it is impossible for me to—”

“ But did you *always* love that other better than me, Bertha?” said Evelyn, fixing upon his fair cousin a searching glance, which increased her confusion. “ Had not these Courtenays come to disturb our early pledges of truth and constancy, think you they would not have lasted till this great difficulty of years had vanished in the mists of time? Gracious! can two short years make such a difference, when in twenty—ay, *ten* years’ time, it will only look like so many days?”

“ But your mother—the Lady Grace?” said Bertha, stammering out her excuse.

“ She loves you, Bertha,” cried he, passionately, “ almost as well as I do, and—oh! *far better* than those smooth-tongued parasites, who have beguiled your fancy. Have they, *can* they have such an interest in you as we, who are allied to you by blood?”

“ Sit down, dear Evelyn,” said Bertha, pointing to a garden-seat, and placing herself by his side; “ let us talk together as we used to do. You are too violent,” added she, “ to hear reason, or I could soon prove to you, in a moment, why it is better, oh! *far better* that we should remain as we are, than risk a nearer alliance.”

“ Dearest Bertha, call me so again ; say but *dear* Evelyn once more in that soft voice, which is sweeter to me than the bird of spring, and I will spare you any farther rhetoric,” said the impassioned youth, as he bent over the fair hand which he fondly detained, and, plunged in a lover’s Elysium, once more resigned himself to the delusive whisperings of hope.

“ My reasons,” returned Bertha—“ nay, do not smother me,” cried she, in a stifled tone to Evelyn, who playfully laid his hand upon her mouth, as an effectual mode of evading a disagreeable communication. “ I must tell you my reasons.”

“ I will not hear them,” said Evelyn, pettishly ; “ you shall not throw cold water upon my love, Bertha. I will have none of your freezing, stoical philosophy.”

“ You *must* !” said Miss Fontayne, in a decided tone. “ Do you remember, Evelyn, what the gipsy said to us that evening we strolled down to the hazel copse ?”

“ And when you were looking out for Lionel Courtenay, Bertha ?—Ah ! it’s down in my notebook, I believe,” said he, sighing deeply ; “ but those oracles are not always to be depended upon. You may remember now, when the sibyl made a false step in her enumeration of past events,

she told us cunningly that things sometimes went by the rule of contrary. What a beautiful evening was that, Bertha! how lovely and fresh every thing looked! at least I thought so, for I was happy in myself, and disposed to be pleased with every body, and every thing. The scene—the least object,” continued he, “ is before me, with the noiseless calm of that still evening. You recollect, Bertha, there had been a slight thunder-storm, not violent, for the gathering clouds were dispersed in light, flying showers.”

“ How we huddled together, all of us!” said Miss Fontayne, laughing, “ as they passed harmlessly over our heads, whilst you leaned over us to shade the rain-drops away from us.”

“ But then, Bertha,” continued he, “ how rural, how picturesque was the scene which burst upon us, as we opened the gate which led into that retired and unfrequented lane; the old man, with his silver hairs, like the patriarch of the wandering tribe, sitting by the bank-side, watching the motions of that black-eyed gipsy, with her dark ringlets escaping from her beavered hat, who was setting up their tent; how warily she eyed us from under her long lashes, without ever condescending to look up from her work, whilst the strokes of her light hatchet, as she wielded it with the grace of a wood-nymph, were

echoed by the soft carols of a sister sibyl, hushing her bantling to sleep with a lullaby of unintelligible jargon."

"And how the latter rushed out of the thicket," interrupted Bertha, "when she caught a glimpse of us! Well do I remember the exquisite symmetry of her form, her Madona features, the checked kerchief thrown over her head, and tied loosely under her slender throat."

"I don't think, now," continued Evelyn, "any of your modern court ladies in their stiff boddices and clumsy draperies, fresh from the hands of a *friseur*, who has set their hair on an end with pomade and wire, any thing to compare with our nymph of the flowing robe and snooded tresses. Ah! I shall never forget that evening, Bertha! The freshness of the air, the glittering drops upon the branches, shining like diamonds in the flitting sunbeam; the curling smoke from the green fagots; the venerable old man; the young gipsy; the idle sprawling urchins surrounding the crackling blaze; the wild music succeeding to the songs of the hushed choristers nestling in the thicket;—it was the prettiest sight I ever saw," said Evelyn, with glistening eyes.

"And do you remember," said Miss Fontayne, "how we tried to deceive her by calling

ourselves brother and sister, and how sternly she reproved us for it?"

"And how vexed she was," continued Lord Fontayne, "that I had nothing better to cross her hand with than that crooked sixpence—that sixpence, Bertha, which you changed for a plain one, and afterwards broke in two, promising to wear one half for my sake! I have never had mine off my throat," added he, pulling out of his bosom the silver fragment, suspended by a black ribbon. "Precious amulet! I would not part with this wee bit of silver for all the wealth of the Indies!" kissing it. "But where is *your's*, Bertha?" said he, suddenly. "I have never seen it for a long time: do show it me—*this* moment," cried he, impatiently. "Good —— you have not lost it?" inquired he with indignation, as Miss Fontayne was prosecuting, what seemed to be, a very useless search.

"O! now I recollect," said she, with some embarrassment. "Don't be angry, Evelyn, but Edith Courtenay always plagued me so about this bit of black ribbon, and so I pulled it out of my bosom one day to show her what it was, and she laughed at me so, that I—"

"What?" asked Lord Fontayne, with a savage look.

“ O ! nothing,” returned Bertha : “ don’t be so cross, Evelyn, I only let her keep it, for it was of no use—you know it was only a little nonsense between us.”

“ Only a little nonsense !” repeated Evelyn, reproachfully. “ O, Bertha ! Bertha !” said he, flinging her hand from him, “ could you find no other way to dispose of this fond pledge of our early regards ? Must this memorial of my unhappy passion be sent to grace my rival’s triumph ? since, doubtless, Edith Courtenay acted by her brother’s suggestion. You blush —you turn pale—ah ! have I pained you, Bertha ? I, who would die to make you happy. Bertha !” said Lord Fontayne, endeavouring to calm his intense feelings, “ I am wrong to tease you in this manner ; but it is hard to resign all one holds dear at one stroke. Be happy your own way—as happy as you deserve. All I have now to intreat of you,” added he, in a firm tone, and a fixed resoluteness of manner, “ is to put an end at once to these cruel, gnawing anxieties. If I am to have no higher claim to your affection than what is derived from our relative situation, tell me so in direct terms, and I will submit to my hard destiny ; but do not ask for my future acquaintance. Either say or *hint* that time may alter your opinion, that your affections are not

irrevocably gone, or let us from this moment cease an intercourse, which can only be a source of anguish to myself, and a subject of painful regret to you. You are silent, dearest Bertha. Is it then, indeed, hard to part? You weep: would to Heaven I might wipe those drops away! Never should you have cause to weep again for me. How I would watch over you—comfort you—cherish you! But it must not be—you have chosen another comforter. Yet, the time may come—look not surprised, Bertha, I have no wish to augur ill of your future prospects;—still, I repeat, the time *may* come, when you may need a friend, a guardian, a protector. Life may not always smile upon you in these gay radiant colours. It is but a chequered scene at best; and even I, who am young, healthy, and outwardly ennobled, have felt its cares. But should a night of sorrow overtake you," continued he, sorrowfully, "should your 'sun go down while it is yet day,' think of me as of one who has the first right to alleviate your griefs, though I am denied the bliss of forming your present happiness."

Lord Fontayne sank back at these words, and the anguish he had long striven to controul burst from his overflowing eyes. He struggled manfully against it; but in vain; and well was it for him that the current of his feelings took a softer

direction, since the convulsive sobs which agitated his frame evinced how cruel and bitter was the disappointment of his heart's fondest hopes."

"Evelyn," said Bertha, shaking off her feelings with a desperate effort, "if what you say be true, (and how can I doubt it?) we must, indeed, part for ever: my word is pledged to Lionel Courtenay beyond redemption; nor have I a wish to recall it. Should my mother persist in her present plans, a few months will see us united beyond the power of human interference. But I wish you could look upon me with different eyes, my dear cousin," added Bertha, whose heart softened at his visible distress; "it grieves me beyond measure to give you so much pain."

"You should have thought of that sooner, Miss Fontayne," cried Evelyn, with stern displeasure, at the marked emphasis placed upon the epithet *cousin*. "I see it all," continued he; "your girlish fancy amused itself at the expense of another, heedless and careless of consequences. My simplicity and folly were only helpmates to female vanity. Well, adieu, Bertha! May you never repent the use of your sex's prerogative! —may you never know a pang like mine!—Bertha! Bertha!" continued he, with solemn fervour, as he pressed her hand to his bosom, all the native generosity of his temper returning at the

sight of her falling tears, “dear, loved companion of my early years, chosen associate of my unformed childhood, wherefore will you not continue to cherish the latent sparks of goodness which your gentle influence has called into life and operation? Wherefore desert me at this critical moment of my existence?—you, whose love is as necessary to the preservation of my wellbeing, as the light of heaven or the air I breathe! You are too good for me by half: but Lionel Courtenay—nay, frown not when I say he is *still* more unworthy of you. Selfish, heedless, and devoted to novelty, not even your charms will ensure his fidelity.”

“Hold! hold!” cried Miss Fontayne, with indignation, mingled with a slight degree of contempt; “let not resentment hurry you into injustice. It is a crime of which Lionel Courtenay, at least, cannot be accused, since *he* never slandered an absent rival.”

“Ah! Bertha,” returned Evelyn, “there was little merit in the forbearance. Petty acts of hostility were an useless waste of time in him who was intent upon undermining the citadel. Yet you wrong me, when you suppose my opinions to be entirely governed by jealousy. It is natural, perhaps, to view a rival with distrust, and prejudice may blind as well as love: but, ah! Ber-

tha, trust my honesty for once, and believe that I have good reasons for thinking Lionel Courtenay unworthy of you. We men have better opportunities of knowing each other's characters than your sex can possibly obtain. Laying aside ill-natured slander, which is sure to attack the favourites of fortune, Lionel Courtenay possesses not a single qualification for domestic life ; and domestic life is the sphere for a wife. One of two alternatives must be yours, Bertha ; you must be either subject to constant restraint and opposition to your natural tastes, or learn to become the heartless, senseless woman of fashion. You will become the last, Bertha ; for it is not in your nature to contend with any one, much less with those who possess your entire confidence."

" All this may be very true and wise, my dear Evelyn," returned Bertha, smiling, " but it is a kind of reasoning better adapted to *your* case than *mine*. I cannot help admiring your rationality, though, on such an occasion," said Miss Fontayne, archly eyeing him as she spoke.

The satire was ill-timed ; the brow of the youthful lord darkened, and he retreated a few steps.

" The poet says, ' sweet are the uses of adversity ;' and compares it to the lustrous beam of an ugly and venomous reptile," returned he, with

quickness. “ If it has the faculty of sharpening people’s perceptions, why do you wonder that I have found your golden idol to have feet of clay ? Put him in my place, and see whether a wealthier dame would not sooner reconcile him to the loss of—not your *beauty*, for that will soon pall in his embraces ; not your *tenderness*—for he will show more gratitude to the meanest of his meretricious favourites ; not your *virtues*—for they will never be fully developed in his society ; and if they were, such a man is blind to their true complexion. No, Bertha, your goodly lands must be spoiled to gild his waste ; and, trust me, *that* is your chief merit in Lionel Courtenay’s eyes.”

Miss Fontayne listened to these unceremonious and unlover-like observations of Evelyn with more impatience than she was accustomed to show. Her eye sparkled, her cheek grew inflamed, and she retorted with equal warmth. The two cousins had insensibly reached the foot of a small flight of steps, which led to a door opening on the second floor of the mansion. Lord Fontayne threw a hurried glance around him :—“ This place,” said he, “ was once a second Paradise to me ; but Eve’s fair daughters are as frail as herself.”

The distant report of a fusee was heard. The sound acted like electricity on both. Bertha

started, and her face became instantly suffused with a brightening glow of pleasure ; whilst Evelyn, who had felt a shivering sickness creeping over him, now writhed, as if roused from his benumbing torpor by the quick sting of a viper.

“ Her lover,” thought he, “ is within hearing, and will soon be within sight. She loves him—ay, to distraction ; and it were worse than madness to stay.”

So saying, he rushed through the open door, crossed, and made his escape into the open court, leaving Miss Fontayne agitated by a contrariety of painful and pleasurable sensations.

It was in this situation that Miss Courtenay found her on the morning to which we have before alluded. Bertha made no scruple in giving her friend the heads of the dialogue which had just passed. Evelyn’s passion appeared to her of such a romantic and precoce description in its first appearance, that she had felt a delicacy in revealing any tokens of what she considered so fugitive an attachment. But Edith was her confidential friend ; and young ladies must *par nécessité* have a *confidante*. She was, moreover, the sister of her betrothed, and well inclined to sympathise in the temporary burst of resentment enkindled by Evelyn’s apparent selfish interference in her future prospects.

Miss Courtenay laughed at the idea of her listening for a moment to such a childish affair ; and Bertha began to think she had acted a ridiculous part in giving heed to such a boyish fancy.

“ Good gracious, Bertha ! how could you be so absurd ? ” cried Edith. “ The boy has seen no other woman, at least no likeable woman, of his own station ; and, forsooth, he thinks he must fall in love with his own relation ! Pray don’t trouble yourself about this little fancy of Evelyn’s. I ’ll swear he ’ll fall in love, in and out again twenty times, before he ’s of age ! ”

Miss Fontayne felt more grateful to her friend for her comments than she had done on a former occasion. Her conscience being easily relieved, and any rising scruple banished by the gay indifference of Edith’s manner, she gladly entered upon the subject of Lionel. It was a fortunate moment for him. There is nothing disposes a good-natured person to the forgiveness of injuries so much as when the offender becomes the victim of another’s injustice. It seems only fair to release him from that portion of suffering we have heaped upon him ; and which, instead of being a salutary punishment, is now become a grievous infliction. Whether Miss Fontayne suspected that these injurious reflections upon her lover had gained wider circulation than around the peaceful

haunts of the sylvan deities, it is needless to inquire. It is sufficient for our history that Miss Courtenay proved a successful advocate, and engaged to bring Bertha's repentant swain a humble suppliant at her feet.

With far different emotions Evelyn traversed his lonely path homewards. A thick cloud hung over his sight; his respiration became painful; and the quickened pulsation of his beating heart kept pace only with the rapidity of his hurried footsteps. The burning heat of the sun increased his raging pulse to madness. He started at the sound of his own voice, as, once or twice, he broke out into hoarse and furious exclamations; and, before he had reached home, the reaction of body and mind had wrought him into a high fever. Shutting himself up in his own apartment, he gave way to all the transports of unbridled passion. Ashamed of a weakness, for which he could assign no equal cause, Lord Fontayne next summoned his pride to his assistance; but pride is a poor balsam to a wounded spirit. After a thousand schemes, commenced and abandoned in the same moment, he determined to take refuge in flight—an immediate, a permanent flight. Duty, interest—all the minor affections, whose daily, hourly claims upon the human agent constitute a code of moral obligation not to be forfeited with impunity,

were all forgotten in the agony which marked the disappointment of “first and passionate love.”

“I will leave this cruel cousin of mine!” cried he. “Never will I stay to be dragged at the chariot-wheels of my victorious rival.”

Grief, even of the severest kind, cannot last for ever; at least, not the outward expression of it. After two or three hours’ solitary confinement Evelyn began to cool in his first vehemence. A message from Lady Fontayne, to inquire if he would not take some refreshment, revived a sensation very nearly approaching the undignified and unromantic feeling of bodily hunger. To think of eating and drinking in his present distress, to be sure, was out of the question; but how to account to his lady mother for his voluntary seclusion, was a still more awkward dilemma: so, after composing his perturbed features, and collecting as much stoical apathy into them as their ever-varying expression would admit, the youthful lover sallied down stairs, with much of the same outward show of bravery as a condemned criminal is sometimes known to assume when he wishes to baffle the idle curiosity of the vulgar multitude.

CHAPTER II.

Hang up philosophy !
Unless philosophy can make a Juliet.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

Alas ! my lord, if talking would prevail,
I could suggest much better arguments.

YOUNG.

“ My dear Evelyn,” said Lady Grace to her son, as he entered her apartment, “ what is the matter ?”

“ Nothing, madam—that is, nothing worth mentioning ; I ’ve only got a dreadful headache with walking in the sun this morning,” cried he, in a constrained voice.

Evelyn had no sooner got the words out of his mouth than he repented having made such a matter-of-fact excuse. His mother, whose delicate state of health had rendered her an hypo-

chondriac in the most tiresome acceptation of the term, now commenced a long dissertation upon his imprudence, and urged upon him a more zealous attention to his health.

“ You look flushed and feverish, my dear Evelyn,” continued his anxious parent; “ do take things a little more calmly: there’s no occasion to pore over your studies so intensely—take a little relaxation.”

Lord Fontayne could scarcely refrain a smile at his mother’s simple credulity; but he was too honest to appropriate the compliment.

“ I’m afraid you place more confidence in me than I deserve,” returned he; “ but I do think a little change of air and scene would do me good in more respects than one. Stafford Montague has written to request that I would join him in London, on his way to Paris; and if you have no objection, madam, I should like to set off to-morrow.”

“ To-morrow! Why such haste?” cried his mother. “ Cannot you wait till Rose Dunmore comes back?”

“ O! Rose will come any day you fix for her return, I dare say,” replied Evelyn; “ she is not a child, to set her heart upon a wedding; and Miss Courtenay’s ostentatious nuptials may well dispense with her unimportant presence.”

“ Methinks you set rather too light a value upon her services,” said his mother.

“ On the contrary, my lady, I have so high an esteem for them as to believe they are competent to supersede my own.”

“ But why should I make a mere conveniency of poor Rose ?” continued his mother, “ and deprive her of an innocent enjoyment in the society of such entertaining people, merely to gratify my own wishes ?—No ! I will not send for Rose.”

“ Do as you please, madam,” returned Evelyn, pettishly ; “ only this I have to say, it would be a greater kindness in you, who have set up for a patroness to Rose, were you to send for her forthwith, than leave her head woolgathering after all Edith Courtenay’s hair-brained fancies. I know Rose of old ; and if she does not rue her blind credulity, I’m not a living soul. I told her to pin no faith on such a threadbare garment as Edith’s fidelity ; but she would not believe me, so she must take the consequence.”

“ Where have you been this morning, Evelyn ?” asked his mother, gravely.

“ Where have I been, my lady ?” echoed he, in a tone of surprise ; “ I’ve been—but is there any necessity—I mean, have you any particular reason for the question ?” stammered Evelyn, colouring violently.

“None,” replied Lady Grace, a little piqued at his evasive answer, “but to prove to you that I take a mother’s interest in your proceedings.”

“That might be done, I should fancy, my lady, without a constant reference to my actions.”

“Is the necessary exercise of my natural and legal authority already become a painful restraint upon your independence?” cried Lady Fontayne, with some emotion; “or have you learnt to deride a mother’s anxiety and careful vigilance? Alas! I have lived too long!”

Lord Fontayne, who was not wanting in filial feeling, though, it must be confessed, he had an odd way of showing it, was touched with remorse at his ill-humour.

“I have no wish to dispute your authority, my dear mother,” said he, affectionately; “but why press it upon me so much? The strongest things get worn out in time, and one’s very nature revolts against the same arguments served up over and over again. A sameness in persons and scenes wearies the eye, like the mariner’s watery landscape; and even virtue, dressed up in the same unvaried uniform, ceases to be praiseworthy and excellent. Variety is the great charm of nature, and is equally necessary to our moral as well as intellectual existence.”

"I am sorry to find you such a passionate admirer of novelty," said Lady Grace, a little sarcastically; "it argues a fatal instability of character in general."

"It is implanted originally in our nature, I fancy, my lady," returned Evelyn. "Every thing we see around us seems intended to minister gratification to this innate principle. The change of seasons—the revolution of the heavenly bodies—the returns of day and night—the inexhaustible and prodigal bounty scattered over the face of the globe—"

"Are of themselves sufficient food for contemplation," interrupted his mother, "without seeking out for other sources."

"But even these," said Evelyn, "are not to be seen in perfection upon one spot of vegetable earth."

"All this I willingly allow," returned Lady Grace. "The works of creation, and the human species, under different modifications, are objects of lawful curiosity and useful speculation; but researches pushed too far may become dangerous innovations. But what has a taste for science or philosophy to do with your dislike to contradiction, or aversion to wholesome discipline?"

"Why, simply this," said Evelyn, bluntly, "that I hate them both; but, like nauseous drugs,

they must be swallowed at times ; and, again, there are times one is strongly tempted to throw them out of the window. One might stay in a place too, and never feel an inclination to stir an inch farther, so long as the whole world lay before one ; but shut one up in a palace for life, with whole acres of pleasure-grounds and troops of feudal slaves—the ready vassals of our will—the restriction becomes a matter of serious annoyance. I don't think, now, I should ever have been contented in Paradise without looking over the walls—*hedges* I mean (for one must not presuppose the art of masonry before the building of the Tower of Babel).—I say,” continued Evelyn, “ I should not have been contented in the Garden of Eden, unless I might have had the privilege of taking a survey of the terrestrial wilderness beyond, which seems to have been wisely contrived for the purpose of receiving our fallen ancestors.”

“ Evelyn ! Evelyn !” said his mother, in an imperative tone, “ I command you to desist from these remarks, bordering upon impiety, if they are not downright so.”

“ You may command my words, my lady,” said Evelyn, his natural warmth increased by opposition ; “ but you cannot controul my thoughts. If you would have unlimited submission on this

point, I am sorry to say you will find yourself mistaken. I neither can, nor will submit to be schooled like a child in leading-strings. Montague and I have long agreed to take a tour together, and methinks you might be glad to get rid of an idle fellow for a short time. Stafford has the purse of a Jew and the heart of a prince withal to help my necessities. He has already bid a long price for the old priory ; but I can't tell what I shall do before I become of age. *Once, to be sure,*" and an involuntary sigh escaped Evelyn, " I should as soon have thought of parting with my life : but circumstances alter cases ; and, if you must know, my lady, there is not the slightest chance that Bertha Fontayne's rising fortunes will come in aid of my falling ones ; and how the deuce am I to support the incumbrance of such an establishment ?"

Evelyn paused, for his mother's countenance underwent such a variety of changes, as alarmed him for the effect of so terrible a shock as that which she had evidently experienced. It was some time, indeed, before Lady Fontayne could command words to express her indignation, sorrow, and regret at the state of mind which could prompt this bold avowal.

" Evelyn de la Fontayne," said she, in a hollow voice, which quivered with emotion suddenly and

violently controuled, “mark my words!—If you prove a recreant to your father’s house—if you part with the inheritance of your forefathers—much as I love you—fondly as I cling to you with the last beatings of a withered, desolated heart, I will yet stifle its natural yearnings—turn counter to my best resolves, and—but no, Evelyn,” said she, sinking back into her chair, “I cannot curse you!—I cannot cast away from my bosom the only pledge of my early love! Alas! I cannot frame my lips to utter a parent’s malediction—the fearful sounds must not be spoken;—but, oh! my child,” added she, in a supplicating tone, “whom I have loved with a mother’s blameable idolatry, punish me not by thy ungrateful returns on the point which is nearest and dearest to my heart, lest thou gain a deeper curse (a curse thou wilt not easily forget) in the relenting prayers of thy heart-broken, widowed parent!”

“Good heavens! my dear mother,” cried Evelyn, as he hung over her agitated frame, and grasped her reluctant hand, “you take in too serious a light a few random words spoken without reflection, and without the slightest intention of putting them in execution. Do not wrong me, dearest mother,” said he, in a soothing voice; “I may be thoughtless—faulty in many respects, but

not deliberately unfeeling, especially towards yourself, to whom I owe so much."

"Then let me never hear such rash speeches any more, Evelyn," replied Lady Fontayne, withdrawing her hand, and striving to recover her shattered spirits. "The bare allusion to an act which I should deem sacrilege on your part afflicts me beyond measure. If I thought these fair lands, which were the gift of royal bounty to your ancestors, and which have so often been won and lost at the point of the sword, were to pass into the hands of another;—if I thought," added she, with increasing fervour, "that this beloved abbey, whose grey walls were once a sanctuary for our exiled sovereign, was to pass into stranger hands, Evelyn, I would beseech all-merciful Heaven to release me from a world of suffering, ere such a dreadful consummation of my earthly trials should arrive."

The spirit of Evelyn was now completely quelled, and, with the perverseness which attends persons of an irritable but generous temperament, he voluntarily accorded the information which his mother's direct inquiries had failed to extract.

"I am not surprised," replied she, "at any influence these Courtenays may exercise upon a mind so flexible as that of your cousin. She has not

sufficient strength of character to resist their insidious attacks. Independent of her fortune, which, to say the least of it, was a very desirable object, I am really sorry you have missed her, Evelyn. Her character was well adapted to yours. Her softness would have harmonised with your somewhat imperious temper. Your intellectual powers would have gradually raised the tone of her mind, whilst her native good sense would have corrected the exuberance of yours."

"Why, madam," cried Evelyn, impatiently—"why go on enumerating advantages lost to me for ever? I know it better than you can tell me. I see it all—feel it all;—ay, and *shall* feel it to the end of my days," added he, bitterly.

"Oh! not that, either," returned his mother; "you are too young to continue long occupied by one engrossing passion. Love at your age is as violent as it is transient."

"But mine is no common case," returned Evelyn, proudly, with the air of a person not inclined to be bantered out of his forlorn passion by arguments, which have a general tendency to make the sufferer hug the dear delusion still closer to the breast, by way of proving its omnipotence; "nor is mine a common feeling on the subject."

“ Well, my dear boy,” returned Lady Grace, smiling, “ I will take it for granted there is something uncommon in the idea of a philosopher in love. Still I see no remedy for you but to get out of it as fast as you can. Your sorrows are yet in the bud. You are not in the cruel situation of one, who, after draining every other source of gratification, exhausts the whole force of his unsatisfied demands upon a single object, risking his all upon a desperate venture. No, my dear Evelyn, there are a *thousand chances* for you. The world is open before you. Look upon it with the eye of reason. The path to distinction lies straight-forward. If you have not the treasures of exuberant wealth, you have rank and importance in society, which may easily command it; and you possess an hereditary right to influence the decisions of the senate, with talents to direct them into a beneficial channel.”

“ It is very plausible—all you advance, my lady,” said Evelyn, peevishly, “ and sounds very well in theory; but you have lived too long out of the world to know how matters are carried on now-a-days.”

“ As they ever were I suppose, Evelyn,” returned his mother, with the consequential manner assumed by persons who plume themselves

upon their fixed opinions, with a positive determination to have the upper hand in an argument. "As they always were. Society is much about the same as it used to be. Some of its members are interested and ignorant; others, of a liberal and enlightened cast. The majority, I grant, are bad enough; and, as they are a numerous body, I trust they have no temptation to enlist you under their banners."

Evelyn made no reply, and Lady Grace felt too much complacency in her own judgment to draw any other than a flattering conclusion from his silence.

She was not a little chagrined therefore when, breaking from his reverie, he observed, that "few people knew what they were themselves, and still fewer were known to others. From all I read and see, and reflect upon," continued Lord Fontayne, "I find it is only ignorance and credulity which leap to conclusions at once. The wisest only live to doubt. How indeed should it be otherwise, since this lower condition of the human race is a progressive state where men and women act various and strange parts, veil their motives cautiously, and arrive at the truth, if they ever reach it, by long and difficult stages? Some people take short cuts, to be sure, which gives them a great advantage over your plodding tra-

vellers ; but then they miss, it is true, some fine scenery by the way, as well as the dreary waste of unprofitable speculation ; others, again, take up with the experience of those who have gone before them, thereby saving themselves a vast deal of trouble, with the acquisition of not a few travellers' lies into the bargain."

"Truly wise are they," returned Lady Grace, "who have learnt to profit by the experience of others."

"That maxim," said Evelyn, "is a sort of Procrustes' bed, which I confess it would strain my faculties to fit. One man's experience will not suit another ; or, if it did, who likes a moral ready cut and dried ? Not I, for one : sooner would I pluck the rose at the hazard of being pricked with the thorn, or rifle the tree of knowledge at the expense of gathering the poisonous fruits of evil."

"Rash boy!" cried his mother, shaking her head, "what have you not to fear from these lawless feelings?"

"That I shall become at last a lawful, loving subject of his most discreet majesty, Charles the Second," retorted Evelyn. "Most people, I find, who have made any noise in the world, have begun with one thing, and ended with another ; so that I may chance to be the antipodes of what

I set out with. In that case, my dear mother, you need not fear for the old priory, as, after running out of the strait-waistcoat of presbyterianism into the modern barefaced nakedness of infidelity, I may finally settle into the sober habit and cowl of a Capuchin friar ; that is, when I have got the whole Councils of Trent by heart ; can settle to a nicety the shape of the tonsure ; or digest that substantial article of transubstantiation, which requires a most capacious swallow."

" I hope more consistency from you, Evelyn," said his mother, seriously ; " the world too will expect more from the descendant of a family whose constancy, hardihood, and fidelity towards the injured cause of religion and virtue are handed down to posterity in glorious characters."

" O ! if you mean the physical qualities of courage and endurance in a good cause, my lady," said Evelyn, " I hope to be even yet with those good knights of the holy cross. For the rights of civil and religious liberty I would go forth to the combat with any Philistine champion ; but, to be consistent in this inconsistent world, is to me a perfect paradox."

" The more versatile and capricious the world appears, Evelyn, the more necessary it must be to have a fixed standard, a steady principle of action."

“ Certainly, if it be attainable,” mused Evelyn ; “ but it must, as I said before, be the fruit of experience. What most people call principles are mere notions poured into the ductile brain of infancy. What is gained afterwards is the effort of repeated hammerings. Few persons actually think for themselves, else how would they continue generation after generation enslaved by the same prejudices, and submissive to the same tyrannical impositions ? The tide of human action, governed by one despotic influence, appears to flow on in the same direction for ages, and it is only the stirring activity of a few bold spirits which gives impetus to the gathering avalanche of fate.”

“ These are extraordinary opinions for his years,” thought Lady Fontayne. “ Where have you picked these strange notions up ?” said she, to her son. “ I know not what you may have learnt at college ; but you certainly were not considered an oracle at Westminster.”

“ Perhaps not, madam,” said Evelyn, with a slight tincture of mortification. “ I don’t know where the fault lay ; but certainly it must have originated in my wayward, indolent temper, else how should I miss the way to the Temple of Wisdom under the direction of such sapient guides ? They reverenced the didactic form ; I

could only tolerate learning by induction. You know, my lady, I am naturally impatient, and prefer short cuts."

" And as you take a variety of these short cuts, in different directions," returned Lady Grace, smiling, " are you not, my dear Evelyn, thereby compelled to measure a larger quantity of ground than if you were to take the direct path ?"

" Be it so, madam ; I gain a proportionate degree of knowledge ; and, what is better, it is all my own, fairly won."

" And *dearly* bought," retorted his mother.

" Is not *every thing* dearly bought in this world of misery ?" cried Evelyn, mournfully. " Mother, do not lead me into these endless trains of argument. I know not what I am, nor can rightly presume what I may become in future. At present, I am launched upon the wide sea of uncertainty without chart or compass. How long I may be buffeted by adverse winds, Heaven only knows : one thing I 'm afraid you will find makes no part of my voyage ; I have no inclination of steering towards the port of matrimony, even if I came within sight of a *terra incognita* with gold and diamond mines, rich enough to convert the abbey into an illuminated palace, like the fairy dwellings of old."

" There 's plenty of time to think of that, Eve-

lyn," said Lady Fontayne: "you have much to accomplish before you take such a decisive step. Joking apart, it is no trifle to choose a partner for life. Your wife will either prove a blessing, or the contrary to you. There will be either happiness or disgust in the marriage state to you, who know no dull medium; and I am not certain, after all, whether you are suited to domestic life."

"Time will decide that question," replied Evelyn. "At present, I feel as if I should make a very bad husband to any but——;" and Lord Fontayne stopped short, covered with confusion; but recovering his self-command, added, "yet I am naturally social."

"So I thought," returned his mother, "till lately, when you have taken such a violent fancy to solitude and midnight ramblings."

"It is, my lady," said Evelyn, "because I cannot live in a crowd, or assimilate my mind to the general mode of thinking. I find no sympathy in the bulk of mankind; or even in any, except a very small portion, and those are not within my reach. I prefer the communion of my own mind, in fact, because its volitions are more interesting."

"But, my dear Evelyn," said his mother, "you run great risk of becoming a gloomy, unamiable,

unsocial being; and misanthropy at your time of life is revolting in the extreme. To be disgusted with the world, and your own species in particular, on a partial glimpse into society, implies a very churlish and suspicious temper."

"I judge from facts, my lady, not suspicions," cried Evelyn, pettishly: "there is no pleasure that I see of, in thinking mankind either more vicious or foolish than experience proves them to be: the passive endurance of such evils is torture enough to a mind of sensibility."

"Well, well," said Lady Fontayne, "you must take your own way, I perceive. You were always an incomprehensible being, and never thought like any body else."

"I never found any person," said Evelyn, "who could give me a rational account of his or her own way of thinking; or rather, I would say, of their habit of being acted upon by the imaginations of others; for a single prejudice, like an impurity of blood, seems transmitted from generation to generation."

"What do you mean by *prejudices*?" said his mother, gravely: "surely you do not mean to slander the doctrines of our holy faith by calling them such?"

"There is no occasion to be shocked, my lady," returned Evelyn; "is not truth better served by

calm and equitable discussion, than by overbearing authority?"

"I meant, simply, to convey to you my belief, that one half of the world know not *what* they believe, and the other half care nothing about it. I cast no reflections upon any dogmas or forms of faith, which are a comfort to the professor, and which contribute to the wellbeing of society. This last is an indispensable qualification, since no worship can be acceptable to the Deity which is not founded upon the purest benevolence of sentiment, and the strictest integrity of action."

"I am glad to hear you make this concession," said Lady Fontayne, with a kindling blush of secret exultation. "Ah, Evelyn! I have yet hopes of you. Life, indeed," added she, "would be too great a burden were it not for the hopes of a blessed immortality: vice would triumph in proud security, and suffering virtue droop under its calamities, did not conscience whisper that 'what is done in the flesh must be answered in the spirit!'"

A melancholy shade passed over the brow of Lady Fontayne as she spoke these last words.

"How long shall you be absent, Evelyn?" said she.

"Not many weeks," replied he; "but it is uncertain. If," said he, hesitatingly, struck by the

anxious manner in which his mother put the question—"if you feel any uneasiness at my absence, I will write to put it off."

"No, no! I do not desire it," said Lady Fontayne; "change of scene will do you good, and reconcile you to a longer—an irremediable separation; for you know, my dear child," said she, in a softened accent of tenderness, "you will not always have a mother to thwart you in your plans of happiness. We must part *some* time."

Evelyn looked at his mother, as she spoke. Her once sparkling eye seemed unusually dim, and the wanness of her countenance shocked him, upon nearer observation.

"My dear mother," said he, "I will not go, unless you will promise to send for Rose, or let her know, at least, that I am gone."

"Why so?" returned she. "I am no worse than usual, only a little faint and languid with talking so much. I have no particular complaint, but weakness, and I fancy Rose will not be long at the Grove; but I will send for her if I am ill."

With this assurance Lord Fontayne and his mother parted on the best terms imaginable; the former for the gayest and most profligate cities of Christendom, and the latter to the quiet indulgence of her feelings in the retired shades of Norman Abbey, not without many an anxious

gaze after the traveller, nor without shedding a few natural drops of regret at the fatality which makes the pursuit of fame, pleasure, or distinction, incompatible with the tranquil enjoyments of domestic life.

CHAPTER III.

On some fond breast the parting soul relies ;
Some pious drops the closing eye requires.
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires !

GRAY'S ELEGY IN A CHURCH-YARD.

IT was about ten days after Lord Fontayne's departure from Norman Abbey that Rose Dunmore, whose fingers were too busily occupied in the now exploded labours of housewifery to allow the indulgence of tender regret at the approaching separation from her friend, was surprised by the arrival of a messenger from the priory.

“ Here is a poor hunchbacked creature wants to speak to *yourself*, madam,” said the house-keeper. “ He seems very harmless ; but the men were for sending him back again, thinking somebody had put him up to coming, for fun like ; but I thought it my duty to come and tell you.”

Rose thanked the good woman, and followed her into a small room, where Andrew, with a broad grin upon his wrinkled visage, waited her presence. After bobbing his head and striking his bald forehead, Andrew next proceeded to frame a speech, the merits of which were lost upon his auditress, who was unable to comprehend, for a length of time, the reasons which had induced the speaker to pay her a call. At last Rose collected from the endless repetitions of sentences intermixed with, "says I," and "says she," that Lady Fontayne was seriously indisposed, more so than common; that it had been a part of Mistress Margery's politics to keep others in ignorance of the fact; but that Mattie had thought proper to introduce a counter-plot, by acquainting Miss Dunmore with these several particulars.

Rose, after leaving the special messenger to the compassionate attention of Mrs. Rivers, went in search of her friend.

"What is the matter?" cried Miss Courtenay. "You have got as long a face as one of my father's long stories."

"Dear Edith," cried Rose, "I must leave you instantly—that is, in the course of a few hours."

"In the course of a few hours!" cried Miss Courtenay, wrinkling her fair brow into an ex-

pression of unqualified surprise. “ Are you going to leave the country so soon, Rose? Why, Monsieur le Comte has scarcely arrived in the Land of Frogs.”

“ Nonsense!” cried Rose, blushing. “ Lady Grace is very ill, and the old housekeeper has sent for me.”

“ Then the old housekeeper’s deputy may just quietly take a step back in the direction he came,” replied Miss Courtenay; “ for, positively, Rose, you shall not stir till I am fairly caged, nor for some time afterwards. You must go along with me and learn how to prize your liberty; indeed you must.”

“ I cannot, dear Edith; do not ask it,” replied Rose. “ Poor Lady Fontayne has not a soul around her but servants, and those chiefly interested ones; for the most willing are not always the most helpful.”

“ Where is Lord Fontayne?” inquired Miss Courtenay.

“ Ah! that is another reason why I should go immediately,” said Rose; “ Evelyn is gone to London, and perhaps farther.”

“ What! making the grand tour already? Well, they say he is grown vastly clever, vastly ill-tempered, and vastly eccentric; all which I can easily fancy. Indeed it does not argue much feeling to

leave his poor mother—such a slave as she has been to him ! giving up all society, and denying herself so many indulgences, in order to give him an expensive education. It's a thousand pities, Rose, when people have not enough to support their consequence. Now, I shall have none of these troubles. My dignity, as Sedley's wife, will want no artificial props. But how very strange it is that Lord Fontayne should leave the abbey just now !”

“ Why so ?” returned her friend ; “ I know he has intended it for some time. He was not at all aware of his mother's danger, as she forbade us all, on pain of her displeasure, to name the secret of her cruel disorder. She has been long declining, Edith, and has suffered more than she chose to confess. Her complaint has been gradually increasing ; and, I fear,” continued Rose, with tears—“ alas ! I have too much reason to fear that it is now drawing to a serious termination ; therefore it would be selfish and cruel in the last degree, were I to deny her the comfort of my presence and sympathy.”

“ Go, my dear friend,” said Miss Courtenay, kissing her ; “ you are a kind, grateful creature, and I trust to Heaven you will never want a friend ! You shall hear from me so soon as I reach London. Sedley has promised to give me a

peep at the Royal Lion; so you may expect my first letter to be a more entertaining production than any hereafter may prove. After seeing the king and the court I mean to settle down into a complete country housewife."

Miss Dunmore left her friend to prepare for her departure. When she came to take leave, an unaccountable sadness overcame her fortitude. She wept upon the bosom of Edith, as if the approaching separation was to be an eternal one, or as if the new engagements of her friend were to cancel the unalienable rights of friendship. With gentle violence Miss Courtenay tore herself from the convulsive embraces of Rose; and, with a steady composure, for which the latter could not account, bade her an affectionate, yet firm farewell. With tearful eyes, and the last words of affection trembling upon her lips, Rose lingered to cast one last look; but no answering glance of sympathy met hers. Miss Courtenay, either from the versatility which marked her character, or in accordance with the self-possessed habits of artificial life, had turned her attention in a new direction; and the employment from which she had been diverted on the entrance of Miss Dunmore was resumed with a calm indifference of manner which poor Rose could scarcely forbear inwardly censuring as an unpardonable apathy. In fact, it

would be difficult to acquit her from such a suspicion ; at least, unless we could, by any species of intuition, enter into the feelings of a young and lively creature on the eve of a union with the man of her choice.

Miss Dunmore, escorted by Andrew, and mounted upon the useful quadruped we have before described, (the official agent of the priory, in the conveyancing line,) soon reached her destination, to the no small chagrin of Mistress Margery, who angrily watched her approach up the avenue. She muttered a thousand curses upon “meddling folks—wished the young gentlewoman had kept where she was—there were plenty to wait on besides visitors. I declare it’s enough to try one’s patience out,” said the *patient* Margery, as she walked towards the door ;—“old Peter’s but just off my hands, an’ Mattie so helpless, I’m forced to let one of the wenches look after her a bit, or there’d be a pretty hue and cry with my lady, for she makes a bigger fuss nor ever with the crazy old soul. It passes my wit now to find out what they see in a poor creature as sits rockin’ herself day after day, gutterin’ an’ mutterin’ about what’s nought. Well, it’s clear she’s enough to reflect on. I wouldn’t be in her place for a deal.”

Mistress Margery here paused to smooth down

her ruffled looks, and saluting Rose with a complacent smile, expressed her great delight in seeing her; “but,” added she, “my lady is very ill,—full of fancies, an’ can bear nobody about her, that ever she liked when she was well, but me. She’s quite light-headed; an’ if one does but mention the young lord’s name, she gets into a passion like. Heigho! but it’s a sad thing to see sich clever folks grow so unreasonable. She calls Mattie an old fool, an’ yourself, madam, nought that’s good; so you see what a pity it is you should have troubled yourself to come till the fever was got down a little;—there must be a change one way soon.”

“Can’t I see Lady Grace?” inquired Rose, in great distress.

“See her? O! dear no, madam, that’s out of the question,” said the officious dame, with a shake of the head; “she’s in a sound sleep just now, an’ the Lord knows what may be the upshot of it!”

“Asleep is she?” cried Rose, somewhat relieved; “then I hope the fever is abated. Where is Mattie?”

“Keeping her own room,” said Margery: “we’ve a sad house just now: but I must be off to my lady. I only left her for a minute, as Jenny told me you were coming up the court;” and away

sidled the consequential housekeeper. She had not vanished above a minute before Mattie's tall, infirm figure made its appearance at an inner door.

“ God be praisit !” said she, clasping her hands ; “ I said ye wadna forsake my leddy in her necessities : we’re in a sair stress, an’ ye maun cast it about ye what is to be dane in this hour o’ darkness, for ye’re douce, an’ can help a lame body ower a stile as well as aebody I ken ;—wadna ye write a line to my lord ? Na, na ! dinna be cast down,” said the old woman, as she watched the pale cheek and quivering lips of poor Rose, who comprehended in one glance Mattie’s worst apprehensions, and the weight of responsibility which attached to herself.

“ I will send for my mother,” said Rose, “ till the nearer relatives of Lady Grace are informed of her danger : but what medicines does she take ?”

“ Naething, naething at a’,” replied Mattie, “ but some black draps Margery gives sick folk for the colic.”

“ Has she had no one to see her ?”

“ Na ;” and Mattie looked self-condemned ; “ the auld doctor has na been summoned.”

“ Then let him be sent for immediately,” said Rose. “ Good gracious ! who would believe that your lady lacks the common attentions which any

poor cottager may find? Why did not Ralph send off an express to London? it is possible Lord Fontayne may not have left England."

"I fear it muckle," said Mattie, despondingly; "but my lord's agent there wad ken the maist expedient way to find him at ony rate."

"Then I will write this moment," cried Rose, "and do you send for the doctor."

"The puir lassie has some sense," thought Mattie, as Rose, giving her mind solely to the exigences of the case, hasted along the dreary passages; "she does na fa' to skreighin' an' wringin' her hands, but she has a needfu' thought, whilk is mair to the purpose."

Rose despatched her business as quickly as possible, and then stole gently to the apartment of the invalid. The door was ajar, and before the cautious housekeeper was aware of her approach, Rose was at the bed-side of her friend, who instantly welcomed her appearance by a look of joyful recognition. "My beloved Rose, is it you?" cried she, faintly, at the same time stretching out her hand, which Rose kissed with eager affection. "This is very good of you; and where is Jenny and Mattie? Nobody comes near me now," said she, with a deep sigh; "but why should they, when my own child shuns me?"

Rose, who perceived that her perceptions were

confused, endeavoured to make her understand the past.

“O ! I remember something about it,” said she, with that tenacious desire to appear rational and collected, which often attends the decay or suspension of the faculties : “ I hear all you say very well ; but tell him to come to-morrow, as I’ve something particular to say.”

“ Jenny has been here all along,” said Margery, in a whisper ; “ but my lady took no more notice on her than if she’d never seen her afore.”

“ I thought,” said Rose, in a tone of severity, “ that Lady Grace had taken a dislike to her favourites ; how comes it that she should inquire after them so anxiously ?”

“ Dear me, madam !” cried Margery, with an undaunted countenance, “ how can I answer for sic folks’ whimsies ? They take likes an’ dislikes in the same breath.”

At this instant a tap at the door announced Jenny. “ The doctor is below, madam,” said she, in a low voice, “ and wishes to speak with you.”

Rose advanced to the bed-side of the invalid : “ My dear friend,” said she, in her gentlest tones, “ I have taken the liberty to send for Doctor —. It will be a greater satisfaction to us all, particularly Evelyn. You know it is a long

time since you had any advice, and your disorder may have assumed a form which will require different treatment."

" Dear Rose," cried Lady Fontayne, pettishly, " do let me alone—pray don't tease me so. I am better considerably ; my pain is nearly gone, and I feel as if I could sleep all the day long. The Physician of souls," said she, correcting her impatience, " knows what is best for us, and into his hands I humbly commit my soul whenever he thinks fit to recall the life he gave. One thing alone I ask at his hands," and she lifted up her dim eyes to heaven,—" that I may once more behold my child in the land of the living!"

Rose told her what she had done, and Lady Grace, pleased at the attention, as well as exhilarated at the prospect of once more embracing her son, consented to see the physician.

When Miss Dunmore descended into the common sitting-parlour, where Doctor —— was in waiting, she felt not a little awed by the professional self-importance displayed in the stiff bend of the doctor's gaunt figure, as he condescendingly greeted her entrance by one of his lowest bows. After some preliminary inquiries, couched in as few words as possible, and those chiefly technical ones, the countenance of the

learned physician grew involved in mystery. He looked unutterable things. His lean visage became still more elongated beneath his bushy wig, which, together with his immense stature and beetling eye-brows, made poor Rose tremble at the sentence which might be pronounced upon the fate of her suffering friend. Suppressing her feelings, however, she obeyed the summons of Lady Grace, and led the way to the sick chamber, followed by the deep, measured footsteps of the gigantic Esculapius. After a courtly reverence or two the physician seated himself by the bed-side of the patient, and deliberately drawing forth a large silver watch of antique workmanship, began to count with seeming profundity of deliberation the vibrations of her pulse. He withdrew the hand in silence, made a few indifferent observations on the state of the weather, &c., then resumed his task, and as deliberately returned the watch to its accustomed station. After a few questions to the immediate attendants, he next proceeded to examine the countenance of his patient, and, during the progress of this operation, Rose had full opportunity to notice what the darkness of the room had hitherto prevented her from observing, viz. that a very alarming change had taken place in the appearance of her friend. Her complexion was livid—her features evidently swollen; the

keen brilliancy of her eye was replaced by a hazy moisture; and her breathing was short and fluttering.

The physician turned round to Mattie, who was in attendance, and addressing a few words to her in private, was preparing to quit the apartment, when the whole apparatus of Mistress Margery's quackery caught his eye. Fully alive to all the dignity of his profession, the physician inquired into its history, and having ascertained to his satisfaction that no other member of the healing art had invaded his lawful dominions, he next applied the uncorked bottle to his olfactory nerves. The doctor gave two or three prolonged snuffs, then delicately applied the inverted phial to the tip of his finger, put it to the point of his tongue, and forcibly restraining the exclamation which rose to his lips, hastily withdrew. As Rose followed him down stairs, his smothered wrath burst forth.

“Madam,” said he, in a voice of thunder, “those confounded old women have killed the poor lady;—yon infernal black draught is a dose for an elephant. There is a strong infusion of opium in it, which, unless corrected by powerful medicines, will do more for the patient than her disease (bad as it is) would have effected in ten years.”

Roused from his usual mechanical inquietude into some degree of alertness, the doctor gave Rose particular and minute directions respecting his prescriptions, and, promising speedy assistance, took his leave for the present.

By the judicious measures of the physician, together with the united cares of the household, to which was now added the skilful nursing of Mrs. Dunmore, Lady Fontayne revived considerably. Her countenance assumed a more healthy hue, and every symptom of immediate danger appeared to have vanished. Still the physician would not pronounce a favourable verdict, and Rose began to feel very anxious about Evelyn, who had now been absent some weeks. Various messages had been received from the Grove, in the shape of friendly inquiry after the health of Lady Fontayne. The latest account that had reached Rose concerning the movements of her friend was comprised in a packet of bridal favours.

The poor old nurse was nodding in her chair, as Rose, who was watching the slumbers of Lady Fontayne, slowly opened the packet. She passed hastily over its enclosures to feast her eye upon a few lines which Edith had written on the morning of her wedding-day. They were more affectionate than ever, and Rose kissed over and

over again the short line which contained the usual signature, "Edith Courtenay," to which was superadded these additional words, "for the last time."

"Edith Sedley will never be to me what Edith Courtenay has been," thought Rose; and she sighed heavily without knowing why or wherefore.

At this moment, Lady Fontayne opened her eyes, gave a wild stare around, and, as if unconscious of her presence, began to address herself to some imaginary object at the foot of the bed. Rose took her hand—it was dry and feverish—her pulse rapid and variable. She placed her hand upon the brow of the poor invalid, which burnt like a coal, and ran to fetch some cooling liquid to abate the fever. The noise awoke Mattie, who started up.

"Gude help us!" cried she, "is my lady waur? O! that he wad but come!" and she groaned aloud.

"Where is my child?" cried Lady Fontayne, in an agitated voice, as she voraciously swallowed the welcome draught. "Where is he?" cried she, in an agony. "Will nobody tell him he is wanted? O! he will come if you will only say I am dying—but I cannot die till I have seen him. No! it is quite certain," and she gasped for

breath. Poor Rose, whom she continued to address as a perfect stranger, could contain herself no longer. She flung her head upon the edge of the pillow and wept.

The warm, trickling tears of Rose seemed to tranquillise the spirits of Lady Fontayne ; she stroked her wet cheek with childish fondness, and gazed upon her with a sickly smile, which made poor Rose shudder.

“ What are you crying about ? ” said she ; “ you have no child—well—well—I will never tease him any more ; but why does he not come ? Has Margery hid him behind the door, or in that cupboard ? ” and she pointed her wasted finger at one of the pannels in the wainscoting. The poor lady continued raving about the matter, so that Rose had no other remedy than to open the cupboard for her inspection, and draw aside the bed-curtains at her feet, at the same time opening the door wide enough for her to ascertain that Lord Fontayne was not in the ante-chamber.

She grew a little more pacified, and again sank her head upon the pillow. In less than a quarter of an hour she raised herself, and bent her ear in a listening attitude.

“ He is coming ! ” said she, in a low, smothered tone ; “ I hear the sound of his carriage.”

Rose listened, but nothing was audible save the

rustling of the withered leaves against the casement."

Lady Fontayne dropped her head upon the pillow with a look of bitter anguish at the disappointment, whilst the excited feelings of poor Rose amounted to agony. At length the sounds were no longer doubtful. They drew nearer and nearer, as a carriage, with the velocity of lightning, whirled round the court.

Lady Fontayne gave a feeble shriek of joy, and fainted in the arms of Rose. Long and alarming was the death-like trance. When, at last, the poor sufferer gradually unclosed her eyes, memory, hearing, and observation, seemed to have failed altogether.

"O ! this is worse than death itself," cried Evelyn, passionately. "O ! Rose, I cannot endure the sight. Dear mother," cried he, in a supplicating voice, "look upon me—own me as your child—your own—your repentant child !" and he hung over her in despair.

Lady Fontayne only replied by a vacant look of apathetic surprise, whilst Evelyn threw himself across the foot of the bed, and wept convulsively.

His mother alone remained unmoved amidst the weeping group, who were now assembled round her bed-side. At length the smothered sobs of

Evelyn appeared to reach her ear ; she grew suddenly affected. Lifting herself up with a desperate effort, she pulled the bed-clothes from his face with her feeble hands, uttered a hasty scream of delight, and, holding out her arms to embrace her son, expired with the inarticulate blessing murmuring upon her lips !

CHAPTER IV.

What was your dream, my lord? I pray ye, tell it me.

RICHARD THE THIRD.

High minds of native pride and force
Most deeply feel thy pangs, Remorse.

SCOTT.

THE shock of his mother's sudden decease succeeding the severe bodily exercise and cruel suspense of mind which Evelyn had endured, brought on a violent fever. For many weeks his life was despaired of; but the malignancy of the disease gradually yielded to the united effects of youth, medicine, and good nursing.

The first object which met his returning senses was Rose Dunmore, clad in sable garments, whose dusky hue contrasted strongly with her pallid cheek.

The sense of his bereaved condition flashed instantly upon his mind. He placed his hand to

his forehead, in a vain endeavour to recall the past, for the painful realities he had witnessed were mixed up with the confusion of ideal phantoms, which had haunted his imagination during his mental aberration.

Miss Dunmore gently pressed his hand, and whispered a prayer of thanksgiving for the preservation of his life.

“O ! what a long, weary night have I passed !” cried the poor invalid, “wandering in church-yards and stumbling over newly-made graves ! I thought,” continued he, in a faint, tremulous voice, “that I was walking in the wilderness, dark masses of clouds disfigured the heavens, and the forked lightning danced before my path in fantastic figures. There was no sound, but a death-like stillness, ten times more awful than the most terrific thunder-peals. The bright cheerful verdure of the trees had vanished, and every leaf looked black as ebony. All living things seemed to have been startled away, or hushed into silence, except one or two solitary ravens, who sat brooding, with their dark glossy wings cowering over the sun-dial and fountain, whose gushing waters were deeply tinged with blood. Presently I espied my mother, seated in the willow-arbour. She recognised me, and rose to meet me ; but her looks

were not of the earth, and I drew back terrified, for her eye was glazed, her complexion colourless, and she was dressed in the fearful garment of the tomb. ‘Start not, my child,’ cried she, ‘at the sight of my grave-clothes. Knowest thou not that I am a suttee, and going to perform the last act of duteous reverence which our holy faith requires from the wife of a true bramin—that glorious act, which will immortalise my name, and secure my admission into the eternal paradise, as a ministering handmaid to my beloved Walter? Holy Bramah, support me!’ cried she. ‘I swear by this thrice sacred lotus, which I hold in my hand, that I will not disgrace my noble caste by the timorous fears of the servile Paria. No! I will immolate myself fearlessly on the shrine of my departed husband, and thou, my child, shalt set fire to my funeral pyre. Let the priests draw near—let the warlike instruments sound—let thy torch be lit at the holiest of altars, and behold me ready to ascend the pile of death, which shall be to me the bed of glory.’ As she spoke,” continued Lord Fontayne, almost exhausted, “a crowd rushed down the broad gravel walk. Two ferocious-looking savages, with beetled-brows and turbaned heads, their cheeks smeared with vermillion, and their mouths stained with betel, took each of them an arm, and

hurried her towards the fountain. As she stooped to bathe her feet, a group of females advanced, the foremost of whom, resembling yourself, Rose, placed upon her head a coronet of scarlet flowers, chanting a low dirge at the same time, which was echoed in hoarse dissonance by the croaking ravens. At length the great bell of the abbey tolled. The lightning ran along in quicker flashes, and, setting fire to the ruined arch, the whole building exhibited one mighty blaze. ‘Adieu, Evelyn!’ said my mother, as she darted forwards to throw herself into the kindling blaze, tearing herself away from my arms. ‘Wherefore does thy fond, but impious love detain me? Look, what a glorious hecatomb! Hundreds of blind Christian unbelievers have been sacrificed beneath these cloistered walls. Their manes will appease the shades of thine ancestors.’ At these words a figure, which I discerned to be that of Margery, poured a phial of oil upon her, when, waving her hand triumphantly, she became enveloped in the devouring flames.”

“And you *saw* or heard nothing,” returned Miss Dunmore, forcing a melancholy smile, “but the hall-clock striking, and the wood blazing in the fire-place?”

Mattie crept to the bed-side.

“Is all over indeed?” cried Lord Fontayne,

mournfully ; “ and have I seen the *last* of her, who was father, mother, every thing to me ? O ! Rose, how little do we know what is good for us ! I, who used to murmur and fret at the slightest contradiction, have now my stubborn wishes gratified. This last dreadful stroke has left me an independent, but, alas ! a solitary, friendless orphan. Mother ! dearest mother ! too fond, too anxious parent ! could my repentant tears recall thee to a new existence, how gladly would I sacrifice this fancied independence to repurchase thy lost authority !—but it must not be ;” and Lord Fontayne wept in all the imbecile weakness of childhood.

Miss Dunmore was strongly affected by the excess of his sensibility. In vain did she pour into his afflicted bosom the balm of consolation ; in vain did she dwell upon the sunny side of his character, and tax her memory to bring forward every touching instance of filial piety shown by Evelyn towards his mother—every grateful and affectionate remembrance treasured up by the latter: all would not do. Evelyn, whose awakened conscience was now writing bitter things against him, would only look at one solitary act of forbearance on his part, in order to perceive the many thousand instances in which he had successfully opposed his brute, ungovernable will

to his mother's enlightened and lawful government. Rose at length gave up the contest, and left him to the uncontrolled indulgence of a self-condemnation, which she trusted might prove as salutary in the event as it was severe in its operation.

It was long ere Lord Fontayne regained sufficient strength to look into his affairs. No document could be found intimating Lady Fontayne's wishes relative to her personalty. Evelyn, with true native generosity of character, pressed upon Miss Dunmore, who was now returned to her own home, the acceptance of a considerable sum which his mother had saved from the wreck of her own fortune. Rose declined the gift, with as much generosity as it was offered, urging as a reason, that Lord Fontayne's means were less adapted to his wants than her own; nor would she accept any thing beyond a few trifling ornaments worn by the deceased. As the minority of the young lord was not yet expired, he was advised by his friend Montague, to make arrangements with his guardian for spending the interval abroad. With his customary inattention to the details of domestic life, Lord Fontayne forgot to make such a provision for his aged dependents as might secure their comfort beyond the reach

of accident. Peter was already better provided for. Jenny, whose dowry had been paid into her own hands by her lamented lady, had made use of her newly-acquired freedom to re-engage herself for life. Ralph and Margery, Mattie and Andrew, alone remained upon the establishment; and it being at length revealed to open day that the two former personages had some time been *one*, the removal of Margery could not well be attempted without endangering their conjugal unity, Ralph stoutly declaring that he would sooner part with his amiable rib than forsake the old premises. Accordingly, the worthy pair were left in full power, with strict orders to render every requisite comfort and attention to the old housekeeper.

“Take good care of your health, Mattie,” said Lord Fontayne to her, “and keep up your spirits till I come back. I shall soon be of age, and then I’ll settle something upon you that will keep you from want; and if any thing goes on wrong, send off to Grassmoor Cottage, and it shall be righted in a moment.”

“Ye’re verra gude, my lord,” said Mattie. “It’s na muckle I sall need to haud body an’ saul thegither; but, eh! my bonny bairn, (ye maunna be angerit that I ca’ ye sae,) dinna be

lang, for I sall hae a weary time on 't, ye see, a' the time ye 're awa' ; an' be sure," added she, earnestly, " take care o' yoursel."

" What for ?" cried he, despairingly. " Wherefore should I cherish a hopeless, cheerless existence ?"

" Dinna say sae, my lord," cried Mattie, reproachfully. " If *he* smite, canna he heal as well ? an' if ye hae nae friends to greet for ye, nor mither to watch ower ye, ye hae a God to serve, an' belike a country to sauve, for they say the great hornit beast has set his cloven fute on this, our chosen land. Weel, weel ! ye maun beware o' the sin o' presumption ; a' ither sins may be bleared aff the buke o' remembrance, but that winna be gotten ower, though ye suld gie your heart's blude for every tear."

Evelyn looked at the old woman earnestly as she spoke. " Thank you, Mattie," said he. " I was wrong to say I had no friends ; they are not less true for wearing a humble livery ;" so saying, he took the road towards Grassmoor Cottage.

" Here's gowd in my hand," cried Mattie ; " mony pieces ; the bairn 's ower free wi' his siller to mak' it last, as I said afore."

It was the latter end of the year when Lord Fontayne prepared to bid a long adieu to the haunts of his youth. The trees were stripped of

their verdant honours, the autumn winds swept drearily through their leafless branches, and the rustling of the dried leaves against the rough bark startled the feathered songsters from their desolated bowers.

The neat, trim cottage-garden presented a cheerless aspect, being strewed with falling leaves and decayed stems of dying vegetables, whilst parcels of dry roots and weeds were heaped in small hillocks, sending forth a strong and curling vapour. Not the most trivial of Nature's varying operations escaped the observation of Lord Fontayne, who, if unable to realise the poet's highest aim, that of ' finding good in every thing,' could yet extract a language from the inanimate scenes of creation, and trace analogies, where others would see only tediousness or disgust. Even the dull barren prospect of the departing year was not without a melancholy charm, more congenial with his feelings than the gay, busy scenes of the city.

" What an emblem of life ! " thought he, as he stooped to unlock the little wicket-gate leading to Grassmoor Cottage; " the season of spring is scarcely over with me; but fate, outstripping the slow march of time, has brought on the autumn of my days."

Rose, who had seen him from the window, ran

to meet him with unaffected pleasure, and led him into the small parlour. A cheerful wood fire blazed upon the hearth. Every thing wore an air of cleanliness, industry, and comfort. The room was filled with ingenious articles of female skill; and the view from the old-fashioned windows was rendered comparatively cheerful by a wide enclosure of pleasure-ground formed of the evergreen yew, cut in fanciful scallops, with architectural pillars at the end of each successive arch. The ready cares of the hospitable owners soon filled the round oak table with tasteful viands; and Evelyn, to whom the sight of food was ungrateful, since the repletion occasioned by a too free indulgence of the voracious appetite which generally succeeds a fever, was compelled perforce to drink without being thirsty, and to eat without any appetite.

“ How snug and comfortable you are!” said Evelyn, when the rest of the family were gone out of the room; “ there is nothing, after all, like a country life; yet, one may get tired of every thing in turn. I don’t even like to see you, Rose, moped up in this manner all your life.”

“ Yet my gay friends,” replied Rose, “ envy me the complete seclusion of this retired spot, and tell me they would willingly exchange places with me.”

“ Don’t believe them, Rose,” said Lord Fontayne, hastily ; “ they like to appear happy by constraint, and to suffer martyrdom in the midst of luxurious indulgence. Too happy in having every good thing under the sun, they would make you believe that they are, all the time, victims to the tyranny of custom. Like solitude ? ah ! so they might, and let them have every thing their own way ; but to give them a true relish for solitude, you must first realise their *beau ideal* of complete rurality. They must have all the elegances, and some of the luxuries of life transported into their Arcadian dwellings, with chevaliers of noble birth, and knight-errants of valorous enterprise lurking near their chosen retreat, or some pastoral Sylvanus piping the dulcet reed from morn to night in honour of their peerless charms. Love solitude ? ay, so they might,” added he, with bitterness, “ for a few weeks—for a few hours—as they do every thing else. Pray, Rose,” said he, with some degree of bluntness, “ do you ever hear any thing now of your friend Edith ?”

“ I have just had a letter,” returned Miss Dunmore ; “ she has, at last, reached London, having been detained on the road, visiting her husband’s relatives. As she intends remaining some time

there, you will most likely see her at some place of public resort."

"I shall not go much into society," said Lord Fontayne, glancing at his mourning habit. "I suppose it will be necessary to see the different members of my father's family; and should they condescend to honour me with their tardy attentions, why I shall return them with good-will, but no farther. They never showed that respect to my poor mother which could induce me to court their acquaintance; and, as for myself, they always looked upon me with an evil eye as an unexpected interloper. It is possible, too," added he, "that curiosity may prompt me to see his most gracious majesty, that is, if I have a chance, and the necessary forms will admit. I am yet a minor; but I understand an introduction at one's own secures one more consequence at foreign courts. But, *à propos* of Edith," said Lord Fontayne, looking earnestly at Rose; "I crossed over the Channel in company with a Frenchman, who had just left Sir Justinian's house, at least so he told me, *sans cérémonie*, just as if I had known him all my life. This Count Somebody (I fancy you must know him, Rose, for he gave an exact account of your character) was a very entertaining companion. I like egotists: they are so full of *themselves*,

they never pry into *your* concerns. I'm surprised you should not have named him, Rose, because, in many respects, he is the sort of person to catch your attention, and he certainly paid you a better compliment."

The confusion of Rose did not escape Lord Fontayne; but he was either too delicate or too proud to solicit a confidence which, to say the truth, was hardly to be expected.

"Shall I write to you?" said he; "I don't mean any regular letters, but a set of odd thoughts strung together as they rise. I will, somehow or other, contrive to drop them upon paper for your amusement. You must not expect a straight-forward journal, but take what pleases my vagrant humour of the time being to give you."

Rose smiled a grateful assent.—"Any thing would please."

"That's very handsomely spoken, dear Rose," said Lord Fontayne, with a more cheerful air and aspect than he had for some time shown; "but, in return, remember, I shall expect some news from the cottage, the old priory and its inmates—"

"And some good advice, my lord, to remind you of what the gay world you are visiting will take such pains to make you forget?" inquired Rose.

“ Well, I don’t mind a very little advice ; but it must only be a *very* little, mind *that*, Rose. I like counsel to be insinuated, and not broadly expressed ;—gentle, tender, persuasive, more like the whisperings of heaven, than the blunt animadversions of fanatic zeal, impiously thundered by one weak, erring mortal into the ear of his fellow-sinner. This of course I do not expect from you, Rose ; but I would not even wish you to be *direct*. Let me draw my own inferences.”

“ Adieu, my dear Evelyn !” said Rose, affectionately. “ God bless you, and preserve you in safety ! Can I say more ?”

“ Nothing more, my dear Rose,” cried Evelyn, wringing her hand ; “ one prayer warm from the heart is worth a thousand studied homilies. But stay ; I have a word to say about yourself. Thank you for all past favours, and look to me in any difficulty, pecuniary or otherwise. Remember there is a debt of gratitude yet undischarged. And, ah, Rose ! beware how you act. Let not that too sensitive heart overcome your ripened judgment ; but, above all, do not throw it away upon the undeserving. It is too rich a treasure to be idly squandered.”

CHAPTER V.

Such is the force of love in woman's breast,
She knows no temporising path to rest.—

ANON.

O ! what a traitor is my love,
That thus unthrones me !
I see the errors that I would avoid,
And have my reason still, but not the use on 't.

HOWARD.

NEVER had Miss Dunmore experienced such a melancholy feeling as that which oppressed her bosom on the departure of Lord Fontayne. Independent of the languor and listless inactivity which attends the removal of powerful stimulants, a secret mistrust of the Count de Villeneuve cast a shade upon every object. She longed to make farther inquiries of him from Evelyn, but dare not even trust her voice to gain the intelligence she so much coveted, lest it should betray the deep interest she felt ; and she endeavoured to persuade herself that it was more than probable Evelyn would have been unable to satisfy her curiosity. The count's letters had been regularly enclosed to

her friend Edith, and by her punctually transmitted to Rose ; yet, devoted and respectful as he had ever shown himself, the delicacy of Rose was alarmed at the scrupulous regard paid to secrecy, and the air of mystery which hung over her adventure. This mystery, to be sure, the count promised to clear up in a very short time ; and Rose, with the generosity of a feeling mind, had promised to suspend her judgment till circumstances should allow the count to emerge from the shade which now surrounded him, and appear in his proper character. Still, it was a state of painful, harassing incertitude, and Rose longed to be released from such a serious responsibility by an open, undisguised avowal of his attachment.

“ What misery have I brought upon myself,” moralised she, “ by a want of proper decision ! Had not my silence and hesitating excuses tacitly encouraged the count, he would not have continued his addresses by letter ; the temporary fancy would have died away, and there would have been an end of the matter. I ought to have done violence to my feelings, and peremptorily refused his acquaintance under such circumstances ; but would that have been generous,” mused she, “ after he had made me his confidante, and candidly laid open the errors of his past life ? I thought *not*, at the time ; but cer-

tainly I was under a delusion, since it was a confidence voluntarily accorded, and I was not called upon to sacrifice my peace of mind to—whom?—alas! a perfect stranger. How can I acquit myself of imprudence?" Thus, over and over again, Rose gave a hasty hearing to the rebukes of conscience, and finally silenced every scruple by the never-failing apology of "it must be so;—what's done cannot be undone."

There was one thing which tended more to shake her confidence than any thing else. In all his free concessions the count never made any promises of amendment. Rose might have judged this abstinence from violent profession a proof of sincerity, had he only expressed a *desire*, a *hope*, an *intention* of reformation.

"Perhaps he expects me to take it for granted," said she; "but then I wish he would say so, or hint something of the kind, and then I should not feel as if I sanctioned his misdeeds: it is not generous at all."

With these floating and contradictory feelings, Rose sat down to indite a letter, where, after sundry vague expressions of good-will, she came point-blank to the discussion of the count's avowed transgressions, and, under the irritating sensations created by her jarring feelings, passed a hasty and severe censure upon her lover. No sooner

was the letter written and gone, than Rose, with the inconsistency of capricious love, would have given worlds to recall it. Her hasty, ill-judged measure only served to increase the evil it was meant to cure. The mixture of pride, sarcasm, and tenderness conveyed in the count's brief reply completely upset the tottering resolution of poor Rose, and her long apologetic answer was a too faithful picture of woman's relenting fondness and blind credulity.

Relying implicitly upon the count's quick sense of honour, and solemn declaration that, excepting facts openly acknowledged, and accusations soon to be publicly refuted, "his character was unimpeached, and his reputation without a stain." She had begun to resign herself to the pleasing hope that a short time would soon clear away every ambiguity. At this interesting period, how doubly painful and mortifying were the suspicions re-awakened by the words and manner of Lord Fontayne ! "Can this be love?" sighed Rose. "How short-lived—how unsatisfactory are its delights!"

These reflections were broken in upon by a visit from Miss Fontayne. Her first inquiry was after Evelyn.

"He has just left us," cried Rose, "and will be on his way to the great city to-morrow."

“ How unfortunate !” returned Bertha, “ as I shall be there myself before long, and it would be rather awkward to meet ;—I mean, it would perhaps not be so agreeable to him. (I dare say he has told you all, Rose.) As to myself, I shall always look upon Evelyn as a brother.”

“ Are you really going to be married, Bertha ?” inquired Rose.

“ I shall be of age soon, you know, dear Rose,” said Miss Fontayne ; “ and when I am released from the heavy bondage of the law,—why, it follows of course,” said she, slightly colouring, “ that I wear the silken fetters of Hymen. You will come to the merry-making, Rose ? There will be a large ox roasted in the village, and the whole vintage of the year 1660 will flow in copious libations to my future happiness ; and this, you know, is not a common occurrence at Ravenstede. You must come to help us in cutting up cakes, and tying white topknots for my village favourites. Little Sally at the dairy is to be married the same day, and I shall give her a wedding suit, and a dowry of two milch cows ; so she will be well off in the world, as her lover has got a good farm.”

Miss Fontayne went on enumerating all her various projects, unheedful of the silence of Rose, or construing it into the interest which she took in these several particulars. As Rose walked out

of the cottage with her, she repeated the invitation. " You will come, Rose, won't you ? "

Miss Dunmore hesitated, at a loss for an excuse.

" Nay," returned Miss Fontayne, " you will not, you cannot keep away. Do you love me less than Edith ? "

" But Edith was going away," replied Rose, " and our future intimacy was uncertain ; but as to you, Bertha, you will always live at Ravenstede, shall you not ? "

" Always, my dear Rose ; at least I hope so. When any thing happens to Sir Justinian, it is possible Lionel may wish to reside upon his own estate instead of mine ; but," added Miss Fontayne, gaily, laughing as she put her arm round the neck of her friend, " there's no occasion to kill the poor gentleman out of the way. We shall have plenty to live on, I hope ; and I wish, my dear Rose, you would come and live with us ; Lionel desires it above all things."

Miss Dunmore, to whom the proposal was not new, gave a negative shake of the head. " I thought that business had been settled," said she, affectionately pressing the fair hand she held. " You know, my dear Bertha, my reasons for never accepting such an offer ; they remain in full force."

“ But what makes you so grave, dear Rose ? ” said Miss Fontayne ; “ so unusually sententious and concise ? ”

“ I grave, Bertha ? ” cried Rose, blushing deeply.

“ Yes, *you* ; there is nothing so very uncommon, to be sure, but I thought you seemed abstracted in a superlative degree. Oh ! I forget. Are you not in love, Rose ? —But why look sad ? ”

“ How should I look sad when all around me are so gay and happy ? —all but Evelyn, poor fellow ! (I did not mean to reproach you, Bertha, by the allusion.”)

“ No, dear Rose ; yet your melancholy reproaches me for my unseasonable gaiety ; but,” continued she, with seriousness, “ you surely don’t imagine that I have behaved unkindly, or rather ungenerously to Lord Fontayne ? I could not possibly foresee that our childish acquaintance was likely to have such a serious termination : besides, what does it signify ? I could never like any one but Lionel Courtenay ; and if he were to die this moment, not a single thought could I ever bestow upon another. O Rose ! ” continued she, with dewy eyes and half-suppressed sighs, “ I know Evelyn hates Lionel. He thinks him unworthy my regard ; but indeed he judges too harshly of him. He may have his faults—who is without

them? but they are the faults of a noble mind. Yes! Lionel Courtenay," said she, with a blush of kindling pride, "is too generous—too indiscreet not to provoke slander in a thousand ungenerous bosoms. He is—ah! I know not what I would say. *This* only I know," said the lovely heiress, whose wandering speech and downcast eyes betrayed the full sense of that total self-abandonment her words failed to describe, "that he is—ah! dearer—ten thousand times dearer to me than my life!"

"God grant he may deserve her affection!" prayed Rose, with fervent sincerity, when she was gone; "though I doubt the permanent influence of this fair creature over so fickle a heart; but what matters it? *she* sees it not—hears it not; or, if so, heeds it not. Happy security!—blissful ignorance! Who would have too much penetration? Who would not dread above all things an anomalous compound of feeling and judgment, suspicion and credulity? O! Cupid, why dost thou not continue to delude thy votary? Why tempt me to the brink of a flowery precipice, and then point to the yawning abyss beneath? But no!" thought poor Rose, again wavering in her doubts, "it cannot be. What interest can the count have in deceiving me? He knows my birth—my education—my principles. He dare

not insult my misfortunes, and the expressions of his regard were too unequivocal to be mistaken. Ah ! he has too much feeling to prosecute a heartless jest !”

In this cruel state of suspense Rose envied the comparatively happy independence of Lord Fontayne.

“ Men can leave their cares behind them,” sighed she, “ and find refuge from the biting cares of sorrow in flight. They can rush into the field of battle, or engage in political enterprise, or dissipate their tormenting feelings in the haunts of pleasure. But woman—poor helpless woman ! must quietly, passively endure the gnawings of that vulture which is gradually destroying her vitals ; —condemned to the dull, monotonous round of domestic occupations, with burning, restless yearnings, that would take to themselves wings and flee away to the uttermost parts of the earth. Ah ! who can paint the tumultuous strife which agitates their unquiet bosoms ?”

Although Rose felt this bitter curse of an ardent mind to the quick, and felt at times the stirrings of that fatal possession, which, in Lord Fontayne, exercised almost demoniacal influence upon his soul, she did not, like him, impiously enter into an angry warfare against the Supreme Arbiter of all earthly events, under the foolish idea of battling

with destiny. On the contrary, Rose, whose early prospects had been as bright and flattering as they were now the reverse, bowed to the decree which had evidently marked out a rough and thorny road for her delicate feet. She felt that the decayed fortunes of her family had placed an insurmountable barrier against the attainment of those objects most congenial with her taste and habits. Her pure and exalted piety taught her to be thankful for the common comforts of life ; nor did the absence of more appropriate enjoyments render her insensible of those outward blessings denied to so many of her suffering fellow-creatures. She knew by a better and a holier teaching than the promptings of a rebellious heart, that to murmur at the Divine will was alike foolish and ungrateful, and that, although the practice of self-command was difficult, it was nevertheless attainable by slow and patient efforts.

“ There is nothing like resignation to the will of Heaven,” and such-like sayings are in the mouths of persons when the ordinary dispensations of Providence are abroad. Why should we not equally apply this consoling doctrine to those troubles which are brought upon us through the agency of dispositions and feelings implanted in our nature ? It is a mistrustful weakness to suppose that a just and holy Being will sacrifice even

our temporal good through their instrumentality, nor allow the wicked to triumph finally; though, for good and wise purposes—to us inscrutable—he may permit them to become “snares in our feet, and thorns in our side.”

In such a manner reasoned Miss Dunmore during those severe mental conflicts which are of almost overwhelming force to persons of acute sensibilities. Yet it was only by constant reiterations of the same arguments, simple, but effectual, that she regained any degree of composure; for let no one foolishly imagine, in such cases, that “the race is to the swift, or the battle to the strong.”

“Every heart knoweth its own bitterness;” and those evils, which come under the decisive appellation of diseases of the imagination, are, from their very nature, the most trying and incurable of all human maladies. In troubles of a less private and delicate description we have the sympathy of the world, the commiseration of friends, the more direct consolations of religion; but how inadequately do we appear furnished with resources against the vexations incident to, and springing out of a peculiar conformation of character! If mankind were furnished, like the inferior creatures, with suitable weapons of defence, then might each armed warrior challenge

his neighbour to single combat ; but, as the matter now stands, ten to one but the indurated surface of a coarse mind resists the slight and delicate touches of an adversary, whilst the home-thrusts of the former deal destruction to a sensitive foe. Yet the advocates of a certain stoical philosophy contend that the strength of the understanding is proportioned to that of the passions !

Rose persevered in the present instance so meritoriously as to be an example how far the discipline of virtuous and “good endeavour” may supply the deficiency of a more robust, mental organization ; for, as to the exact merits of the subject which perplexed her most, poor Rose could not, with all the sense for which her errors of feeling were absurdly made accountable, see her way at all plainly. Good as well as evil might come of it ; and, with her prepossessions in favour of the Count de Villeneuve, the good preponderated infinitely over the evil.

The count had, it is true, led somewhat of a wild and roving life ; but he had acknowledged his fault—the first step to repentance in the opinion of Rose. He was somewhat sceptical on points of faith, which she had been taught to revere as fundamental proofs of piety. Miss Dunmore, who was rather more inclined to superstition than bigotry, was willing to allow free

liberty of conscience towards others; and, consequently, was not so much shocked at a freedom which, in Lord Fontayne, had always appeared to her in the harmless light of an honest inquiry after truth. If these qualities of her lover's character at times took a darker tinge, the glory of reforming him shed a brighter halo around her attachment; and to have led captive such a mind by the resistless force of her charms was a victory proudly won, and not difficult to be retained by the continued exercise of those intellectual graces which survive the fascination of more evanescent enchantments, and to which Rose, in the simplicity of her heart, attributed her conquest over the affections of the Count de Villeneuve.

Sometimes, to be sure, when the imagination of poor Rose was more than commonly tinctured by the gloomy views infused into her early education, another and a more serious perplexity awaited her. The present time might but be a season of extraordinary temptation, in which the great adversary of souls sought to lead her wandering steps into the downward path of perdition; but again, she thought, “Can the noble, the elegant, the frank-hearted Count de Villeneuve be indeed an angel of darkness?”

She might have exclaimed with Miranda in the *Tempest*—

There 's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple.
If the ill spirit have so fair an home,
Good things will strive to dwell with 't.

“ May it not rather be,” mused Rose, “ that my accidental encounter with this strange being, who possesses such an irresistible influence over me, was one of those singular occurrences, incomprehensible to me, but intended to answer some special purpose of divine appointment? Who knows but I may become, through the blessing of Heaven, an instrument of much temporal and spiritual good to him ?”—and this transporting thought for some time took full possession of her bosom, and continued to delude her fancy, till the count's silence, on the subject of the reformation his fair mistress had planned for him, became an enigma still more difficult of solution. It was long ere Rose could come to any decisive mode of conduct.

At last she resolved upon stating the exact nature of her feelings to the count ; and, as a late, but honest atonement for her clandestine proceedings, to beg a suspension of farther intercourse till circumstances should authorise an open avowal of his sentiments. When this affair was accomplished a load was taken off her mind ; and scarcely was the letter despatched before another, in the handwriting of her friend Edith,

made its appearance. Sweet and welcome was this epistle. The contents ran thus:—

London.

DEAR ROSE,

The honey-moon is over; the probationary season is past, and Love is yet fresh and warm, as in his young novitiate. Sedley is all that a reasonable wife could wish, and more than an unreasonable one ought ever to possess. Of my domestic happiness, dear Rose, it is impossible to speak in too high terms. Every body is so obliging as to appear pleased with *me*, and I can do no less than be pleased in return. In short, I lead a life of tranquil enjoyment; very different, to be sure, from what I once thought the acme of human felicity: but even this short trial convinces me that the pungent qualities which formerly seasoned my moments of delight, are not half so agreeable as the wholesome viands which are now my daily fare. Truly sorry was I to exchange the quiet of our friends' rural dwellings for the bustle and gaiety of London;—I, who used to delight in the prospect of indulging freely in the pleasures of a town life!

I have been to court, Rose, and who should I see there but your paragon of paragons, Evelyn Fontayne, looking wretchedly out of sorts! and

no wonder, for they say his violent, ungovernable temper broke his poor mother's heart:—and how strangely indecent to make his appearance in public so soon after her decease! The crowd was too great to allow me a chance of getting near him, but he recognised me by one of his stiff, haughty bows, and once or twice stole a glance at our party, and then withdrew his eye hastily, as if fearful of encountering some unwelcome object. Was it *ma belle sœur*, think ye? Is not the poor boy heart-whole again? I fancy, Rose, he is in a fair way of becoming so by “laying,” as the poet has it, “a kinder beauty to the wound;” for, though I tried to catch his eye several times afterwards, I found it impossible to arrest his attention, so completely were his regards riveted upon an interesting creature, who stood on the left hand of the queen, dressed in a rich Spanish habit, profusely covered with diamonds. His earnest looks caught her attention; and she, in her turn, seemed equally fascinated. Certainly, Rose, I never saw any one so much improved in person as Lord Fontayne. The fire of daring manhood, which sparkles in his eye at one moment, is in the next succeeded by a tender languor of serious thought; and that marble complexion of his looked doubly interesting in his mourning habit. The whole contour of his face is

singularly fine—a perfect model for a sculptor. I wonder I never found it out before, Rose ; for you know you never could persuade me to think him any thing civilised. But, as I was saying, Evelyn continued to gaze on the young foreigner, for such she appeared to be, alternately directing the attention of an elderly beau to the lady, and entering into a very animated conversation with the latter. He was fairly smitten, you may depend upon it. Never wish to go to court, Rose ; it is the most fatiguing thing in the world. In all great places, you must know, people are lost, if they do not unite in great bodies. What a mortifying truth ! it is numbers only which gives them any individual consequence. What a sight it would have been to such a rustic as yourself, Rose, to behold an assemblage of the first rank and fashion, as if they were at a country wake, or vulgar bull-baiting,—all waiting in fidgety impatience for the opening of the folding-doors; which led by a series of gradation chambers to the presence ! The instant each magic lock was turned, up ran peers and peeresses, dignified right-honourables, and undignified but wealthy commoners, all eagerly snatching up their trailing draperies, and scampering away in most undignified haste, to gain their lawful precedence. The rush through the opening doors was tremendous.

In the scuffle I lost the tail of my robe, got separated from Sedley, and missed my noble patroness, the Duchess of C——, who, according to etiquette, made her *entrée* in another direction. There was I, alone—unsupported, in the immediate presence of royalty.

“What must I do?” cried I, in a most amusing perplexity.

“Make up to my Lord Fenchurch,” cried one of the polite beaux, evidently enjoying my distress.

“Who is my Lord Fenchurch?” asked I, as much at a loss as ever.

“The little fellow in green,” returned a good-humoured old gentleman.

Accordingly, I presented my credentials to the first lord of the bedchamber, whose appearance answered the aforesaid description. Glancing his eye over the card, he muttered “Duchess of C——,” and very complaisantly handed me forwards. Now, I dare say, Rose, you will be anxious to have an account of their majesties’ looks, dress, and deportment. Truly sorry am I that my confusion at the time prevented me from taking a fairer sketch of them. My impression is not, however, at all equal to my preconceptions. The person of the king is still fine, and must have been even elegant in his youth. His features are cer-

tainly harsh, and to a degree unpleasing, from a cast of libertinism which prevails over their manly and open expression ; yet his manner is courtly, and so gracious withal, that one is easily induced to forget the slight prejudice. The queen is a mild-looking, ordinary person, with an expression of disquiet and chagrin, which is no improvement to her native homeliness. Poor thing ! she looks as if she would vastly like to have a good fit of crying, could she so far compromise the dignity of her high station as to give way to the impulsés of human nature. There were some dames of quality at her right, eclipsing beauties in the courtly hemisphere, and most superbly attired ; yet, I did not like their confident, self-satisfied looks, their haughty assurance, and unblushing graces. How I longed to see Lionel's fair bride amongst these tricked-out goddesses ! Yet, they tell me, their manners constitute what is called an air of high fashion and birth. These privileged beings (for I am not of the number now) struck me as any thing but well-bred. I was but a poor commoner, to be sure, therefore the men chose to stare me out of countenance, whilst the women (pretty automatons, who can only look by rule) scarcely deigned to honour me by a glance. The king was the only civil person amongst them. He smiled upon me most benignantly, was pleased

to notice my likeness to my mother, and gallantly intercepted my courtesies by a royal salutation. My agitation and fright rendered me insensible of the honour at the time ; but Abel assures me the regal impression has left a bright spot on my cheek. We shall wait here till the bridal party arrives. You will write to me, Rose, for you know I am always interested in your proceedings. My husband joins in best wishes with

Your affectionate

EDITH.

The contents of her friend's letter were very novel and entertaining to Rose ; but what surprised her most, was the taste Edith had so suddenly acquired for domestic quiet. None of the gaiety, but much of the romance of youth was already flown, and her satire was now lavished upon those fashionable follies in which she had once participated. The language of Edith was kind, but its hyperbole was flown, together with those endearing appellations, which she had been wont to bestow upon her favourites with a lavish hand.

“ Her husband will be every thing to her,” thought Rose, as she folded up the letter. “ Poor Lady Fontayne was right, and Mrs. Sedley’s female friends must be content with beholding

the efficacy of Lady Barbara's recipe for getting rid of old friendships; yet if all my married friends follow her example, it will not be fair play,—they all the gainers, and I the only loser."

Such were the involuntary reflections of Miss Dunmore, as she repeated this line over and over again—" You know I am always interested in your proceedings ;" and Edith's formal announcement of a fact which Rose took for granted, had the tantalising effect of making her doubt whether her friend *really* felt as much interested as formerly in her proceedings.

The next post brought a few straggling lines from Evelyn,—“ just as a token of remembrance,” he observed,—not a word about court, merely a brief remark that “ he had been befooled once into public,” but should not venture there again in a hurry. The letter concluded with a promise to write again more fully at a future time.

Leaving Miss Dunmore to assist at the nuptials of the heiress, though she positively declined accompanying her to town, we shall follow the footsteps of the neglected lover in the pursuit of that happiness which had hitherto eluded his eager grasp.

CHAPTER VI.

But midst the buzz, the hum, the shock of men,
To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
To roam along, the world's wide denizen,
None blessing us, with none whom we can bless.

This—this is solitude.

CHILDE HAROLDE.

BIRON. O ! we have made a vow to study lords,
And, in that vow, we have forsown our books.

LOVE'S LABOUR 'S LOST.

All truth is precious, if not all divine,
And what dilates the pow'rs must needs refine.

COWPER.

SAD and dreary were the sensations of Evelyn, when he found himself wedged up in a dark street in the midst of the crowded metropolis, at the latter end of November, 1683,—that gloomy, miserable month, which in these days none but bustling citizens, thorough cocknies, or rapacious usurers, whose interest forbids even a temporary

migration, would deign to open their eyes upon in the great city. Little inducement indeed was there for any but the votaries of Mammon to remain stationary under present circumstances, whatever object had allured their wandering feet thitherward. Woe to the unlucky wight whom business or curiosity drew to the focus of all intelligence! His natural vision would vainly strive to penetrate the dense, suffocating atmosphere which turned noonday into the darkness of midnight, rendering the use of artificial light indispensably necessary towards carrying on the ordinary affairs of life. The present season was one of peculiar gloom: a thick, impervious veil hung over the great luminary of day; a thousand optical illusions deceived the plodding pedestrian, condemned to brave every casualty in the pursuits of his calling, whilst a multitude of confused heterogeneous noises proceeding from the enraged drivers of jammed up vehicles, mingling with the hoarse bawlings of passengers, and itinerary merchants, deafened his ear at every turn.

So singularly unpropitious had been the weather for the last month, as to create a serious annoyance, and not a little alarm also, to the inhabitants of the metropolis. Great surprise was expressed by many distinguished foreigners that

a country so famed for its internal resources should have no better external advantages for carrying on its innumerable projects ; and it became a standing jest in the polite circles when the learned Persian ambassador made the following remark :—

“ That it was great wonder, seeing de Inglis have much monies, they no buy one leetle bit of sun ! ”

Stunned by the rattling of carriages, and the number of jarring sounds, all equally loud and importunate, oppressed by the dull weight of the heavy atmosphere, and sick at heart with the load of uneasy sensations which oppressed him, Evelyn sat leaning against one of the windows which overlooked a range of lofty houses, begrimed with an accumulation of smoke ascending in countless volumes, and, checked in its upward course, again descending in clouds of dusky vapour. The narrow street which Lord Fontayne had chosen for the sake of retirement as well as convenience, branched off from a larger one into another still more capacious. It was consequently a thoroughfare for passengers and private carriages, although too confined in limits for any more extensive traffic.

“ What the deuce am I come here for ? ” thought Lord Fontayne ; “ to be crammed with filth, suffocated by smoke, or to have the drum

of my ear cracked with these villanous noises ? This is neither quiet nor social comfort into the bargain ! and now I may wait in this detestable nook, Heaven only knows how long ! till his most gracious sunlike majesty returns to enliven with his ugly phiz this dingy hemisphere, which resembles chaos in every thing but its silence. I suppose those gallant courtiers with whom I claim kindred will not be forthcoming at present. Montague writes me his father is dead suddenly, so there 's an end of our voyaging. Heigho ! there 's no remedy against fate ! so I may as well rummage the printer's bookshelves, and get an insight into fashionable literature, till some lucky shift of the celestial bodies gives Dan Phœbus a chance of lighting his lamp over the towers of Westminster. What must a solitary fellow like me do, stuck up in one of yonder crazy machines, perambulating this great city at the risk of breaking my own neck, or endangering that of my neighbour !”

Evelyn, thus condemned, *nolens volens*, to become studious in his own defence, sat down to examine the contents of a pile of volumes selected by a bookseller of fame and credit, whose shop, at the sign of the “Golden Fleece,” was one of the grand marts of literature in the seventeenth century. The collection included, amongst other works of inferior celebrity, A new edition of

Shakspeare's Comedies, from the pen of Sir William Devenant and Sir George Etherige; Satirical Poems by the witty Earl of Rochester; Essays on the Drama and Courtly Offerings from the Poet Laureate Dryden; Reflections et Maximes, par Monseigneur le Duc de Rochefoucault; Political Pamphlets; *Londinopolis*, or an Historical Discourse of the City of London, with a translation from some abstruse German Metempsychosists; philosophers well versed in the occult science; oracles, who could calculate to a satisfactory nicety the probability that “the native under such a planet, and begirt with such and such influences, should meet with a violent death by strangling or otherwise—showing how such a calamity was to be averted by a propitiatory offering of a certain fumigation. The work set forth, likewise, “how the soules of men doe inhabite various regions after death, passing into diverse animaules, &c.”

Amongst the rest was a History of the Ottoman Empire, with some account of the rise and fall of Mahomedanism, together with Horace's Art of Poetry, “done into verse” by Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon.

Lord Fontayne turned over leaf after leaf, without being able to fix his attention upon any of the numerous volumes before him. The abstruseness of one fatigued him, the flippancy of another dis-

pleased him, whilst the party-spirit which ran through the pages of a third, disgusted him by the exhibition of powerful talents leagued against the cause of freedom.

Shakspeare (the poet of all ages), Milton, in the every day garb of his muse, the Turkish History, the German Mystics, or the absurdities contained in an old Miracle play, “Betwene Johan the husband, Tyb the wife, and Sir Johan the priest,” alone interested or amused him.

“Rochefoucault is too much of a sneerer for me,” thought Evelyn; “and, after all, there are more vices than mere follies in human life—more real sorrows than fictitious griefs—more cause for tears than broad-grins. This Frenchman would destroy the *beau ideal* of perfection, which every body of any feeling loves to cherish in the inmost recesses of his soul.”

The meagre doctrine of expediency, the delicate *finesse* of placing the actions of mankind upon one universal basis of self-love, flattered not the taste of Lord Fontayne, whose ambition sought a remedy, not an excuse, for the diseases of human nature. The style, the ingenuity of the arguments interested him; but he closed the book with disappointment, and turned to those authors who gave true pictures of life without seeking to reveal the hidden springs of action.

The novelty of this pursuit pleased and en-

grossed his attention for several days. The disgust he had early experienced in being forced into the rugged paths of literature, and the laborious drudgery of scholastic exercises, had hitherto prevented him from giving any attention to modern classics.

“ I will turn student,” thought Evelyn; “ it will be an occupation, at least, and give me some distinction in the world. Let me see, what shall I be? a poet?—No; I could not write in this murky den, and at Norman Abbey my ink would be too much ‘ tempered with love’s sighs’ to be intelligible out of Bedlam; and, besides, genius is only patronised by booksellers. Shall I be an antiquarian,” mused Evelyn, “ and commence operations by digging up the ruins of the old priory? it will be a more innocent amusement at all events than administering to the present vitiated taste for obscene wit and senseless ribaldry. Certainly, one must find some records of monkish folly, some ancient absurdity inhumed ages ago, the revelation of which will doubtless benefit posterity as well as enrich the cumbrous pages of the ‘ Monasticon;’ nay, who knows but the cloistered inmates, who held earthly treasures in sovereign contempt, have deposited their dross in the same place with the worthless dust of their departed brethren, under the

same pious hope of a future——” Evelyn was going to add “resurrection;” but the image of his mother, with the stern expression of her countenance, whenever his strong taste for ridicule touched upon sacred things, flashed upon his mind. “It is no bad idea, however,” thought he; “some day or other I will put this plan into execution, and the fruits of my learned researches shall be accurately reported in two duodecimo volumes to Sir William Dugdale. But, let me see, I have not the proper *gusto* for this elaborate science; I am no lover of antiquities, and cannot even bear the thoughts of getting old myself. Old age is a dark season, full of sorrows—full of regrets—full of weaknesses—infirmitiess of body and imbecillities of mind.—No! I will not turn antiquary. To be a completely learned man, too, implies such an immense stock of multifarious knowledge, which would take years in accumulating, and life would be half over before one could hope to confute a Jewish rabbi, or puzzle an Indian bramin.”

Lord Fontayne, as he cast his eye over the desolate apartment, meagrely furnished, and comfortless in the extreme, read over for the twentieth time the meteorological and astrological computations in Lilly’s famous “Merlinus Anglicus,” which hung over the chimney-piece.

“I’ll be an astrologer, and cast my own nat-

vity," said he, aloud, opening the book of occult wisdom. Evelyn, who, like all imaginative people, was inclined to superstition, insensibly grew interested in the search, and after two hours' calculation of those

"Excellente aphorismes to be considered off by those who praktis the genethliacal partes of astrologie," the agreement of his rude horoscope with the calculations of the German soothsayer startled him.

"30th, Mercury in ♀ in an angle afflicted of ♂ in the ♀ and ♀ in an angle afflicted of ♂ makes an idiot, fanatic, or frenetic fellow, for his brain, like to a cracked looking-glass, doth repre-
sente a thousande divers fancies."

Evelyn threw down the book, and laughed outright at his own folly. Yet the noble science of astrology had many supporters in those days; and when we recollect that James the First was a firm believer in the marvellous, we shall not be surprised at a credulity which rather belonged to the age than the individual.

"Alas!" thought Evelyn, relapsing into his habitual seriousness, "wherefore seek to be a scientific miracle or a conscientious devotee. What return shall I hope for by enriching my country with the spoils of ancient and remote lite-

rature, or increasing her native resources by my political skill or adventurous discoveries? Shall I court imprisonment like Galileo? or be goaded to the block like the brave, the gallant, the noble Raleigh? or languish in an hospital like the Flemish painter, for believing the evidence of my own senses? No, no! the age is not yet ripe for the free progress of truth and the unmasking of popular error."

In this enumeration Evelyn forgot or overlooked the philosophers and statesmen, at the head of whom stood the renowned Bacon, who had arrived at as great an eminence as their predecessors and compeers had been unfortunate. The fact was, that Evelyn's voluntary studies had been of a very vagrant description, and his reflections drawn chiefly from the ample volume of nature. Like the wild bee, his roving fancy shunned the luscious odours exhaled from the sickly exotic, and flew to revel in the balmy sweetness of the desert flower. What were systems, or measured rules, or mechanical arrangements to him whose towering mind would fain overlook the boundaries of time and sense, and comprehend the truth in a single glance!

Evelyn's opinions, however erroneous, were retained because he found nothing sufficiently power-

ful to overrule them; and his doubts were of too subtle a nature to be vanquished by the Herculean club of controversy.

“ Every writer,” he was wont to say, “ except one or two of the ancients, and they were honest enough to confess that they knew nothing after all, reasons upon false premises, and thereby makes false deductions. All their reasoning goes towards the establishment of some well-supported popular theory. They do not draw out both sides of a subject fairly, but give us their own illuminated portion, contrasted by the dark shades they cast upon the other; wasting their own labour and the reader’s patience by discussing unimportant, uncontested points, whilst they offer no solution to those problematical inquiries which may arise in the bosom of sincere, ardent persons, not content to take things upon a bare, dogmatical assertion. I should like,” Evelyn would say, “ to see more modesty of argument, more simplicity of feeling. Why should these zealous dogmatists charitably take it for granted that their adversaries are governed by the worst motives? Why should one poor, short-sighted mortal set himself up above another, and pretend to hold the key which unlocks the mysteries of time and eternity? Let not the elevation of the subject be a vaunting source of confidence! Mean, proud, arrogant man de-

cides unblushingly where angels tremble and adore! The higher the ground, too, the more likely a weak head should suffer from giddiness. A generous opponent may be wounded, but never will be vanquished by the use of unfair weapons; and to confound the conscientious sceptic with the blasphemous infidel is a gross affront, not only to the dignity of virtue, but to the majesty of Heaven."

To a certain extent Lord Fontayne was right in his conclusions. So long as the human race exists there will, and must be an infinite variety in modes of thinking; and the accurate observer will find these different modes admirably adapted to the diversity of constitutional capacity.

To balance the undue proportion of his outward gifts, Heaven not unfrequently denies to the highly endowed amongst men that peace and serenity which often falls to the lot of the simple one, who bows in deference to a principle which his natural incapacity teaches him it were useless to explore.

On this account it is that the wisest men have the most doubts, fears, and perplexities. It is only their humility which triumphs in the end. They leave the briars and brambles of controversy for the broad road of practical usefulness. They trust to an explanation when the curtain of sense

is withdrawn, and remain content to pick up as much good as they can in the world, and diffuse as much happiness as lies in their power amongst their fellow-creatures. They neither pretend to reconcile us to things against our reason, nor blame us for our involuntary opinions. They merely counsel us to suspend our frail erring judgment till the final consummation of all things shall enable us to decide dispassionately; and, in the mean time, to cherish honourable and exalted notions of the unseen, unknown Intelligence; to reverence him in his works of order and beneficence; and finally, to adore him in those celestial traits scattered throughout the page of revelation.

“Such a teacher of divine philosophy I once knew,” sighed Evelyn; “too early, alas! for my ultimate benefit. Would to God he had still lived to direct my froward path! But the guides and protectors of my youth are gone; whilst she who might have been—what might she not have been to me in time?—the sun of my prosperity!—the light and warmth of my peaceful dwelling, whose smiles would have awakened every latent, generous sympathy of an isolated heart!—the inspirer of my best affections!—wife of my bosom!—mother of my children!—transmitting to future generations the proud honours of an unblemished

name with her own gentle graces and winning virtues! Yet why do I recall the past? Was she not free to choose? Ah! and perhaps she *has* chosen by this time!" thought Evelyn. "Lost—lost to me for ever!"

Agonised and oppressed—disdaining the unsubstantial honours which awaited him—loathing a friendless, spiritless existence—and worn out by the intensity of his feelings, Lord Fontayne threw himself into his couch, and fell into a long, stupefying slumber.

CHAPTER VII.

Satire 's my weapon, but I 'm too discreet
To run a-muck, and tilt at all I meet.

POPE.

He was a cold, good, honourable man,
Proud of his birth, and proud of every thing;
A goodly spirit for a state divan;
A figure fit to walk before a king.
Tall, stately—formed to lead the courtly van,
On birth-days glorious, with a star and string.

BYRON.

EVELYN awoke with the bright morning sun full in his face, as the sonorous peal of a neighbouring church sounded the hour of noon. He looked out of the window toward the corner of the open street. The cloud which had so long hung in a threatening attitude over “the devoted city—the Babel of iniquity—the mother of harlots, drunk with the blood of the saints,” as certain Apostles set forth in their denunciating inspi-

rations, was now dispersed, and the sword of Divine justice returned into its peaceful scabbard. Hastily arranging his toilet, and despatching his solitary meal, Evelyn set off for the residence of his guardian relative—the clear bright rays of the returning sun shining upon the new clean buildings, erected since the tremendous conflagration of 1666, and not yet disfigured by smoke as in the more populous parts of the city—the freshness and comparative lightness of the atmosphere—the joyous aspect worn by the plodding citizens, and the lively notes of mutual congratulation on the state of the weather which greeted him on all sides—had an exhilarating effect upon Evelyn's spirits.

“ Why shouldn't I be as happy as these poor devils,” thought he, “ who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and are thankful even for passive blessings ? To them, a reprieve from trouble becomes an actual bounty ; and yet there is something of the old English humour about their faces after all—a wrinkle of mistrust, which it will require some days of settled sunshine to smooth down. They have not the joyous aspect, either, of contented subjects. To my fancy, now, they are neither on good terms with the climate nor the government. Commend me to a Frenchman for the virtues of much enduring

loyalty. The streets of Paris would have given more unequivocal signs of pleasure on a day of public festivity like this. There Louis le Grand may murder one half of his liege subjects one day, and by giving a *fête* to the other half the following day, bring a thousand wild flourishes of ‘ *Vive le Roi!* ’ upon his sacred ears.”

“ What! treason in the open day? ” said a strange voice near him. “ It is well for you, young philosopher, that you stand within the domains of the pacific English monarch, instead of the streets of Paris.”

Evelyn blushed at being detected in the very foolish and indiscreet practice of telling his thoughts aloud.

He looked round him with some degree of impatience at such an impertinent interruption of his soliloquy.

He had by this time reached St. James’s Park ; and the stranger, who had been lounging listlessly against one of the trees in the long avenue, now raised his eyes from the ground, and mechanically continuing to pat a favourite spaniel, directed a scrutinising glance towards Evelyn, mixed with a certain roguish wagery at his evident discomposure.

“ What is your name, my friend? ” inquired he, with a careless drawl, as Evelyn involuntarily

paused in his movements to consider what notice it was necessary to take of an anonymous joke. The additional query roused his ire.

“ My name shall be forthcoming on all proper occasions,” said he, haughtily ; “ and I wear a sword to chastise the insolent,” placing his hand on the hilt of his weapon, and withdrawing it as instantly ; sarcastically observing, that the “ beadle might do his business more effectually.”

“ Softly—softly,” replied the stranger, with a countenance whose unruffled expression seemed as inaccessible to the disdain, as it had been to the anger of the impetuous young nobleman. “ Softly, young gentleman ! there is no necessity to proceed to extremities. I merely asked a civil question, which you have noticed by a very uncivil answer. It might have saved you from an ugly sort of a scrape to have made me your friend instead of your enemy. Hedges have ears, and trees are no bad conductors for the electric fluid of treason.”

“ I care not who knows my thoughts,” said Evelyn, doggedly ; secretly ashamed, however, of his undue warmth.

“ It may be more necessary to know in what way they are repeated,” returned the stranger, moving off towards the wilderness ; “ though your appearance may shelter you from the prohibition which excludes ‘ mean and unwarranted persons’

from royal haunts. Ask the fellow yonder," said he, pointing to the avener, who was training his hawks near Rosamond's pond, "if his vocation has not taught him that gentle blood is best shown by gentle manners."

Evelyn felt the rebuke.

The stranger drew back a few paces, whistled up his frisking spaniel, and eyeing Lord Fontayne with some degree of interest as well as curiosity, added in an under tone, "One word in your ear, young gentleman, if you would get on at court, act more of the English cavalier than the Italian bravo. Politeness in these 'piping days of peace' is a more useful quality than mere physical courage. The king himself is no English bull-dog, and detests brawlers. Hark ye, now, I was going to offer you a piece of excellent advice, in return for which you would thrust your rapier in my bosom. Is that a fair retaliation?—*Bon jour, Don Quixotte!*" and with a graceful salutation the stranger continued his walk forwards.

There was something in the air and manner of the speaker which seemed to place an interdict upon any farther communication, and Evelyn pursued his walk in a less agreeable mood than he had commenced it. Several times did he turn his head instinctively, to notice the unceremonious stranger, who was now joined by another gen-

tleman. Their conversation seemed unusually animated ; but was suddenly broken in upon by a full burst of music issuing from the imperial band, stationed at the corner of the Bird-Cage Walk.

The stranger started from his lounging attitude, bent his ear with profound attention, and appeared to beat time with his head and foot. Presently Evelyn observed his companion taking the same direction with himself, and quickening his pace, he soon reached the door of Lord ——'s elegant mansion. The noble owner was at home, and upon his announcement, received him with an air of measured courtesy, apparently more to satisfy his own dignity, than out of any respect towards his visitor. After some general inquiries, the subject of which tore open afresh Evelyn's recent wounds, his noble relative proceeded to more direct personal investigation, and scrupled not to cast indirect insinuations, reflecting upon his kinsman's general habits and character. Evelyn's proud spirit, which might at this moment have been easily softened into a full and free confession of past delinquencies, revolted at these sweeping condemnations, and coldly declining the proffered services which were so ungraciously offered, he was preparing to depart, when the door opened, disclosing to view the personage

who had recently joined the stranger in the park.

The owner of the house slightly introduced his ward to Sir William Temple.

“Lord Fontayne!” echoed the benevolent baronet, with a warm grasp of the hand. “Are you the son of my friend Walter? Why have I not seen you before?”

“Simply,” replied Evelyn, whose handsome features relaxed into a smile at this hearty address, “because I only knew you to be my father’s friend by hearsay.”

“Ah!” it was my fault, said the old gentleman, with a self-reproachful shake of the head; “I ought to have made you out before. Young people are not over-fond of putting themselves forward to the best advantage, and it is but *fair* we old ones should make the first advances—eh, my lord?” said he, appealing to Evelyn’s guardian, whose patrician features were more than ordinarily discomposed by this *mal à propos* address.

Evelyn began to express his thanks in the best way he was able, which, from the confusion of contrary feelings towards the two parties, was awkwardly enough; but the good-natured baronet cut short his gratitude at once.

“No thanks at all, my lord. You owe me

none; but if your lordship would put me in good-humour with myself, give me the means of repairing my fault by leaving your address."

Evelyn took out his tablets at these words, and scrawling the name of his temporary residence, tore out the leaf and presented it to Sir William. The latter glanced his eye over it, shook hands with his young acquaintance, and, promising a speedy call, suffered Evelyn to make his exit.

"I like the youth," said Sir William, when he was out of hearing; "he has his father's quick eye and good-natured smile. There is, moreover, a thoughtful melancholy about him which seems to bespeak one's sympathy. I wonder much that your lordship never mentioned him to me before. I fancied that the Fontayne property came into your family, my lord. Little did I imagine that my friend Walter had left a son and heir."

"I believe you were mistaken," replied the earl, coolly; "it is impossible to dispute the claims, lineal and virtual, of the present *worthy* representative;"—and a deliberate emphasis upon the last epithet marked the bitterness of the irony.

"Ah! How is that? What does your lordship mean?" inquired Sir William. "There is nothing bad in this youth's character?—nothing very flagrantly bad, at least, I should hope?"

The earl's speaking silence served to confirm the hearer's worst apprehensions ; yet the latter perseveringly continued his interrogatives.

"Pardon me," replied the earl, with a stately manner ; "the subject is an unpleasant one, and I am unfortunately placed in a very delicate situation. By the will of the old baron, to whom I was heir-at-law, in default of issue by Sir Walter, I was left one of the guardians of this youth at a time when his very existence was unknown to me. During his mother's lifetime the exercise of this legal function would have been an act of supererogation ; but her recent decease renders it necessary that I should look into the conduct of this young man ; and, indeed, I am grieved to say the result has been not at all to my satisfaction."

"How ?—what ?" said the downright matter-of-fact Sir William, who never liked the circumlocutory forms of speech in ordinary discourse. "Do speak plainly, my lord. What has the poor lad done ?"

"What would have reflected eternal disgrace on either you or I in our younger days, Sir William. But the times are altered. Profligacy abroad, and misrule at home, must necessarily breed a proportionate contempt for natural and legal authority."

“To the point in question, if your lordship pleases,” cried his hearer, a little impatiently.

“Why, then, plainly and simply,” said the earl, unbending his features into an affectation of blunt honesty, forced into the utterance of a disagreeable truth, “this young nobleman will be, I foresee, a most troublesome personage, sticking like a bur to one’s political career. His early years were spent amongst a horde of savages in the wilds of Scotland; and latterly, amongst the rude peasantry of his native manors, where, I am told, he was the Puck of the village. Busby—the strict, the erudite Busby, could make nothing out of him. He missed his degrees at college, wasted his scanty patrimony amongst a set of idle, dissolute wits, and established a club founded upon republican principles. Here is a catalogue of accomplishments in a youth barely twenty!”

“Pshaw!” returned Sir William, bluntly; “mere venial errors—peccadillos!—which Time will run away with, as he does with some things one would less wish to get quit of!”—and Sir William gulped down a rising sigh. “Give the lad time and fair play, and reasonable encouragement to a more virtuous course, and, take my word for it, these mighty grievances, which it appears to me, my lord, are somehow or other

exaggerated, will vanish like mists in the sunbeam."

"I wish the conclusion may verify your prediction," said the earl, coldly; "but, for myself, as the representative of a noble family, and the father of two promising sons, whose morals I should not wish to see exposed to the contagion of evil example, I must beg leave to decline the experiment."

"Why, surely now, my lord," said Sir William, with a broad stare of surprise, "you don't seriously mean to set your face against your own relation, and leave this poor fellow to bear the brunt of all the fire and shot which may be levelled at him from a thousand slanderous tongues? Faith, the world's bad enough, by my conscience!" muttered the baronet; "but I did not think it was come to this pass neither. Smooth-tongued villainy may well chuckle over its prey when one's next-door neighbour cries 'mad dog!' at one. Think a little, my lord, before you put this harsh sentence into execution. Picture your own promising sons in the situation of this friendless youth; would a look, a word of yours, in that case, paralyse the hand that was stretched out to protect them, or chill the breath of sympathy which warms in their behalf?"

"I did not go to the extent of reprobation

you have been pleased to foster upon me," said the noble earl, proudly. "These doors will always be open to Lord Fontayne whenever he pleases to honour Camden House with his presence; that is, so long as he conducts himself with outward decency and good-breeding. I shall certainly wave the honour of entertaining his chosen associates; and as to his political absurdities, fortunately some time must elapse before he will have a chance of trying the strength of his unfledged opinions upon the legislative assembly of the nation."

"Do as you please, my lord," said his visitor, taking up his hat; "I have no business with other people's concerns. They do as they think proper, and as I wish to have the same liberty, there can be no objection to my following the bent of my inclinations, which will lead me, in the first place, to make farther inquiries concerning this youth, who is the son of my earliest friend; and, in the next place, to offer him what protection is in my power to bestow."

"I sincerely wish you may find him worthy your patronage, Sir William," returned the earl, proudly.

"Why, as to that matter," said the benevolent baronet, "perhaps I may, and perhaps I may not. The odds are against me, as times go, and

people seldom meet one half way in a good intention ; but that 's neither here nor there ; the deed is done, and the issue must be left to fate, or Providence, I should say. The good is my own ; the evil purpose to which it was put is clean out of my account-book, and the worst side of the question leaves me better satisfied to have risked a doubtful good, than to have left a positive duty undone. And then, my lord," continued Sir William, brightening as he spoke, " life is not all shade : there are some sunny breaks in the gloomiest day, and there are feelings and thoughts, and sluggish virtues which the voice of sympathy and kindness may rouse from the death-like torpor of inaction. Such a reward (and it will sometimes occur to the persevering philanthropist) repays one for many a wasted, toilsome hour, returned in heartless ingratitude."

The worthy baronet paused, but no answering look met or encouraged his enthusiasm. The unmoved countenance of the earl retained its stony, freezing apathy, as if a responsive echo to nature's proudest, noblest sympathies would have been too mighty a condescension for patrician dignity.

" I have the honour to wish your lordship a good morning," said Sir William, bowing stiffly, and anxious to quit the presence of a man

whose artificial cloak of courtesy imposed upon him the necessity of suppressing the indignation which he felt at his illiberal sentiments—"thank God!" cried he, as the ponderous door closed after him with a thundering crash—"thank God! I'm out of that man's sight! There is a thick, heavy atmosphere around him, which damps all one's rising energies; a black November fog;—a cutting easterly wind;—a sirocco blast. I know not what it is most like—things the most opposite and disagreeable meet in him. The fellow's breeding is only skin deep. Nothing but lip honour;—courtly semblance;—an apish mannerism, which affects good conditions all the time it is writing a libel on human nature. Confound him for a cold, calculating, thick-skulled legitimate branch of the aristocracy, whose blood has never been marred, nor his wit mended by a cross breed! Let him hug himself in his fancied superiority; he has gained it by the sacrifice of virtue's true nobility of feeling."

Such sentiments, the offspring of an enlarged and elevated mind, came with peculiar force from the lips of a distinguished statesman of unblemished manners, and unimpeachable integrity. They were repeated that same evening to a party of chosen friends; some of high rank, and all eminent for shining talents and enlightened patriotism.

The opinions elicited in this social debate, although connected with subjects of a political nature, stimulated the worthy baronet to follow the dictates of his own heart, and the following morning saw him at the door of the humble lodgings to which Evelyn had been recommended by his law-agent.

“I am true to my word, for a courtier, am I not?” said Sir William, on entering. “To let you into a secret, my young friend, this blunt way of mine is getting me out of fashion at court. However, I care not, so long as there is enough of favour left to help the needy on the high road to preferment. But how happens it,” cried he, “that you are lodged in this uncourtier-like style, my lord?”

“I had no choice in the matter,” replied Evelyn; “and one place is as good as another.”

“Humph! a philosopher of the order of Zeno,” thought the baronet. “The lad has not waded deep in the sensual stye, or he would have shown a better taste for luxuries. Books too!” as he turned over the pages of several odd volumes which lay upon the table. “Poetry, physics, divinity, astrology, &c. Humph! two muses, and an infinity of intelligences! The lad’s no fool at all events.”

“ These books are not of my own selection,” said Evelyn, “ nor have I done more than glance them over. I am sorry to say, my unsettled habits have been unfavourable to the pursuits of literature.”

“ More the pity! more the pity!” cried Sir William, shaking his head. “ Pleasure is a good handmaid, but a tyrannical mistress. How did you get on at college?”

“ But indifferently,” said Evelyn; “ and yet I read more than any body gave me credit for, and gained what is of more value than high-sounding characters—no inconsiderable quantity of ideas: that is, I began to reflect to some purpose, and my first step towards improvement was the undoing of all or most which I had previously learnt.”

“ Right! right!” answered Sir William; “ spoken like a man of sense. What recks it that you have missed the crabbed doctrine of the schools if you have got the rudiments of true learning by heart?—but are you sure of that, young gentleman? Youth is apt to be rash and hasty in its decisions. Nothing truly valuable is to be gained without labour and perseverance; there is no royal road to the temple of wisdom.”

“ It is no wish of mine to despise the popular oracle,” replied Evelyn. “ I approached it with

reverence ; and it was only experience which taught me its fallibility. Mechanical knowledge is very useful, and I regret the want of such a powerful auxiliary. It might save one's trouble as well as vanity, at some future period, to find every possible variety of every possible idea already anticipated. The least indolent persons are those who think for themselves."

" That may be true," returned Sir William ; " yet it will be found necessary to correct one's judgment by the opinions of those who have gone before us."

" I see," replied Evelyn, smiling, " you will compel me perforce to give up my arguments in favour of indolence."

" My dear young friend," replied Sir William, " I should be grieved to see such a mind as yours either imprisoned in the den of sloth, or set afloat on the wide sea of barren speculation."

" I believe you must let my mind take its own course," said Evelyn ; " any attempt to arrest its natural course will only make it break out in a fresh place ; although," added he, with more modesty than the preceding remarks indicated, " I am not so ungrateful as to refuse a guiding star."

" And what advantage, I pray your lordship," returned Sir William, shrewdly, " would a guid-

ing star be to him who is determined to follow his own wandering lights?"

"Because," replied Evelyn, laughing, "a star implies a gentle, neutral, passive influence, always fortunate in its operations where pride is lord of the ascendant."

"Well, do as you please," said Sir William; "I am not ambitious to rule over your destiny, unless it be to avert some unpropitious influences; and as I am better qualified by years and experience to discern the signs of the times than yourself, give me leave to present your lordship to their most gracious majesties, who hold a court next Thursday, at the castle of Windsor; which, since the destruction of Whitehall, is now the imperial residence. Ay, that, and the plague which preceded it, were sad national calamities. I was out of the country:—but, 'it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.' The plague took off a superfluous population; and the fire gave us, in lieu of wooden houses and narrow lanes, elegant durable buildings, wide streets, and, thanks to the genius of Sir Christopher Wren, that towering structure the Monument."

Evelyn thanked the kind-hearted baronet for his friendly offers, but fought shy of his advances in the way of patronage, by pleading his minority,

and the recent death of his only parent, as forming a seemly and reasonable excuse for remaining in privacy.

“ As to your late bereavement,” replied Sir William, “ a sufficient period has already elapsed since that melancholy event to answer all the purposes of decency and propriety ; that is all we have to do with in the present case, as your private feelings should yield to utility. The indulgence of hopeless grief cannot benefit the dead, and may seriously injure the living. As to your other disqualification, his majesty does not stand upon trifles, and my introduction is sufficient ; besides, I have a reason for wishing you to go—you may be out of the way another time, or I may be otherwise engaged, or a hundred casualties may happen : in short, my good friend, you may not so readily find a court-guide, if you let the present opportunity slip out of your hands. I am not quite so young as I was, to be sure,” continued Sir William, “ but you will find me profitable in the main ; and as to being tiresome and prosing, *that* you must learn to put up with for the sake of the substantial friendship tacked to it.”

The glowing countenance of Lord Fontayne expressed his warm sense of Sir William’s kindness.

“ And now,” continued his visitor, “ I have another thing to say ; it is my maxim never to give advice without following it up with some practical offer of assistance, for I reckon the giving sight to the blind in a rough road, without doing my best to help him over it, only an insult to his misfortunes. I have ventured to find fault with your lodgings, therefore it is my duty to look out for better ; so, if you have no objection to take up quarters with a solitary widower, make my house your home so long as you remain in town.—No ! I will take no denial,” continued Sir William, noticing Evelyn’s hesitation ; “ you shall have your own way—go in, and come out as you like, without being asked any questions ; only,” added he, “ you must be ruleable on all reasonable matters, discreet and well-conducted. I have a fair, and orphan niece, grown to woman’s estate, whom I mean shortly to place at the head of my table. She is, now, in sure ward and keeping of a decent gentlewoman, whom I took into my family when I lost—that is, some years ago. So, you see, young gentleman, meaning no offence, for youngsters now-a-days never deem such things any scandal, I give no quarter to bacchanals and midnight revellers.”

“ I want no lenity on that score,” returned

Evelyn, " and shall thankfully accept your conditions."

" To-day then let it be," said the baronet; and with a promise to that effect, Sir William shook hands with his new acquaintance and took his leave.

" There is something good in this wicked world, after all," thought Evelyn, when left to himself; " if people, now, did but consider how cheaply gratitude may be purchased. A kind look, a cheering word, scattered on the path of the wretched, spring up as flowers, whose perfume sweetens our toilsome pilgrimage. How prodigal are mankind in every thing but the sweet charities of life!"

Evelyn soon became domesticated in his new home, and the amiable manners of his warm-hearted host, his ready wit, and inexhaustible fund of general information, gave that zest to the quiet enjoyments of domestic life, so necessary to prevent them from subsiding into dulness. Evelyn, too, had much to see in the metropolis, many objects of interest and curiosity to engage his attention; and Sir William, whose only son was at this time absent from home, himself undertook the task of being his conductor. Lucy Temple always joined the social circle when no strangers were added to the family party. Having

been brought up in great retirement, her manners were shy and reserved, as she seldom spoke, and that only in monosyllables. Evelyn set her down for a nonentity at once.

“ Yet she is certainly neither inelegant nor bad-looking,” thought he, as Lucy one day, forgetting her usual restraint, ran to meet and embrace her uncle after a longer absence than usual; “ and there is something of soul, too, in those eyes of hers.”

CHAPTER VIII.

But for in court great portaunce he perceiv'd,
And gallant shew to be in greatest gree,
Eftsoones to court he cast t' advaunce his first degree.

SPENSER'S FAERIE QUEENE.

Through the grey mist of buried ties
The heart's fond instinct sleeps in night ;
But let some gleam of memory rise,—
Nature will vindicate her right!

ANON.

THE eventful Thursday at length arrived.

“ What a piece of useless parade !—and what is it all about ?” thought Evelyn, as he underwent the tedious ceremonial of a court toilet, and the idea strengthened upon witnessing the crowds assembling before the door of the presence-chamber. His conductor pointed out to his observation all the personages, English and foreign, of any distinction or eminence.

Evelyn's eye wandered in every direction, without meeting a single face that he knew, till, upon reaching the presence-chamber, he recognised his friend in the park. “ Who is that gentleman ?” inquired he, to Sir William.

“ What ! not know the seat of honour, my lord ?—but I forget, you are yet a novice.”

“ Is it really the king ?” said Evelyn.

“ The same,” returned Sir William, smiling ; “ I find his majesty and you are old acquaintances. To tell you the truth, I guessed as much before.”

“ Ah, now I recollect,” said Evelyn, much embarrassed ; “ his face was familiar to me, though I could not tell the reason. Now, I find it was from his resemblance to the stamp on the current coin.”

This short dialogue passed in a whisper, for the crowd still pressed upon them, and impeded their advance to the presence. At length they drew up, and Sir William presented his young friend. The king laughed heartily at the confusion of Lord Fontayne, and, patting him on the shoulder, said in a low tone, “ Never talk politics in the king’s highway, my lord, it ’s a dangerous habit.”

Evelyn retreated as fast as courtesy would permit, yet not unobserved by the female party in an opposite direction. Pushing his way onwards, he came in front of the lady before mentioned, who was dressed in the Spanish costume.

“ Do let us get out, my lord,” said the baronet, taking hold of Evelyn’s arm. “ Why, what is the matter ? are you fascinated already with that brunette of the coal-black eye ?”

“ What a magnificent-looking creature !” exclaimed Evelyn, his eyes intently fixed upon the young foreigner. “ What a commanding stature ! what jetty eyes and crescented eye-brows ! what a graceful, antelope figure !”

“ And how like yourself, my lord, about the nose and chin ! Who can she be ?” asked Sir William.

“ Is it the Portuguese lady you mean ?” said a gentleman near them ; “ her name is, I believe, Donna Maria Isidora da Guerilla, and perhaps a score more names into the bargain. The Portuguese and Spaniards make longer christenings than we do, and empty a vocabulary of names upon their children to eke out their dignity.”

“ Da Guerilla !” repeated Sir William ; “ I should know something of that name :—yes—it must be so ! Come along, my lord,” said he, drawing Evelyn away ; “ your marked observance may be disagreeable to the lady.”

Evelyn reluctantly followed his friend. When they had regained their places in the cumbrous, heavy-wheeled vehicle, which brought them to the palace, and were once more *tête à tête*, Sir William, after a silence of a few minutes, said, with some abruptness, to Evelyn—“ This fair Portuguese is your sister, my lord !” Evelyn stared. “ I have no sister.”

“ Yes, you have,” replied Sir William ; “ and

I believe we shall be able to prove that this same Donna Isidora is the same person—nay, do not look disconcerted, there is nothing to be vexed about: on the contrary, this lady, if she at all resemble her mother, will do honour to your name, for she certainly has a claim to bear it, and wherefore she is called after her mother's family, is a mystery to me; but were you entirely unacquainted with her existence, my lord?" inquired Sir William, rather incredulously.

"Entirely so," returned Evelyn: "but how comes she here?"

"Donna Isidora's mother (the Lady Blanche da Guerilla) was a great favourite with her majesty, before her marriage," replied Sir William, "which may account for this circumstance. I saw her child when I was in the convent of Santa Maria, at Villanova, and apprised your father of certain facts which had been treacherously concealed from him. The house of Guerilla, my lord, was a noble house; but it was a proud, ay, and a revengeful one too:—but it is useless to rake up the embers of past sorrows. You know the cruel circumstances of your father's death. That affair, doubtless, cast a shade of oblivion over the subject; and I have been too much out of the country—too much occupied, and too much engrossed with personal afflictions to renew my former interest about the matter. After your fa-

ther's second marriage too my interference might have been resented as impertinent ; and, besides, I had no right to divulge what those most concerned in the business thought proper to conceal. All secrecy, however, is now at an end, and I congratulate your lordship on a discovery, which promises to add a new charm to your domestic life."

The mystery of the fair Portuguese became a subject of conversation the next day. Lucy listened with an unusual degree of interest, and Evelyn was more than commonly pleased with the interest she expressed. All ardour and impatience, he besought Sir William to make immediate inquiries.

" I shall rest neither by day nor night till I have got to the bottom of this mystery," said he ; and, to humour his petulance, Sir William sallied forth to gain all the information he could collect from the most authentic sources. Whilst the good baronet was on a voyage of discovery, Lord Fontayne amused himself in watching the operations of Miss Temple and her sober-looking *gouvernante*, as they sat at their embroidery. Addressing some few words to the old lady satirically, reflecting upon her occupation, the irascible lady took them in such high dudgeon, that Lucy found herself obliged to interfere, and she managed the

mediation with so much adroitness, as more than convinced Evelyn she was no fool. To his surprise, Lucy could talk, and *well* too, when her feelings were called forth. Evelyn, moreover, discerned that she had a great taste for wit and humour, without any pretensions to it herself.

“She is very good-humoured,” thought he, “and has the prettiest little hand and whitest teeth I ever saw.”

Lucy, forgetting her natural shyness, laughed heartily at the ludicrous pictures which Evelyn sketched for her amusement.

“If you ask me what a court is like,” said he, “I’m afraid I can give you no suitable idea. To me, it appeared a thing made up of heat and glitter, and tumult—of bows, which approached to genuflexions, and whalebone curtsies, which must have cost a month’s training.”

“But who was the lady you and my uncle were talking about?” inquired Lucy, timidly.

“That is what I should like to know above all things,” replied Evelyn, with quickness; but instantly turning the conversation, he added, “People say there has not been so splendid a court held for a length of time. Affliction seems an atonement for many transgressions, and his majesty’s recent illness made his appearance a sort of jubilee. His good-natured subjects have

forgotten all their grievances, and found that, like old Falstaff, they ' could have better spared a better man.'"

" But who is the lady you mentioned ?" said Miss Temple, with some anxiety. The question annoyed Evelyn. It was either very stupid or very indelicate, he thought, that Lucy could not take a hint.

" To tell you the honest truth, Miss Temple," said he, with some embarrassment, " it is a secret between your uncle and myself."

" A secret, is it ?" said Lucy, with a faint, almost inaudible sigh ; " I didn't know—that is—I mean—I beg your lordship's pardon," and she hung down her head, colouring violently.

" O ! there is no harm done, dear Miss Temple," cried Evelyn, with his accustomed frankness of manner, " the secret will soon be no longer such. I assure you I never saw the lady before ; and it is only her extreme likeness to some parts of our family which makes me anxious to know who she is. She is beautiful, to be sure, but there is no lack of beauty at the English court, though hers is of a very novel and striking kind. I don't know what it is that pleases me so much in her, unless it be that I felt flattered by seeing my admiration returned by an equal degree of interest."

Lucy's countenance, which had begun to brighten, was again overcast at these words, and she stooped down to ply her mechanical task with an intensity which attracted Evelyn's observation.

He would have chid his young hostess for trifling so laboriously, but the vinegar aspect of her duenna forced him into a politic silence. The sight of Lucy at her work brought back former times—Ravenstede—Bertha—the antique oratory, and all his prejudices against the gentle craft, which had so often suspended more agreeable employments, returned in full force. He sighed involuntarily, and Lucy lifted up her eyes with an expression so soft and tender, that Evelyn thought her quite charming. The entrance of Sir William broke up the conference. Taking Evelyn into a private apartment, he gave him a minute and circumstantial account of his proceedings.

"I have not, myself, a doubt," replied he, "that the fair Portuguese is your lordship's sister; but, though the evidence is strong enough to convince every reasonable person of her claim, it will be necessary to proceed with caution, as every legal proof of your father's first marriage is lost to us by the death of the only witness. The old Marchioness D'Alvargo, to whose care your sister is consigned, has told me her whole history. There

are wheels within wheels, my lord, and an old politician, like myself, knows how to set them going. Donna Isidora has been brought up under the care of the Lady Celestina from the period in which I first saw her in the Convent of Santa Maria. The Guerilla family allowed her to remain under this protection, with strict orders that she should take the veil at an early age. This event was, however, procrastinated from year to year, by the good abbess, who was a most conscientious Catholic, and unwilling to force the vows upon her innocent charge, without due preparation and deliberation on her part. These repeated delays roused the anxiety of the family, who wished to lose every trace of a connexion to which they had always been hostile; and no measure seemed so plausible as the one which they had adopted. Unfortunately for these views, the youthful Isidora had taken a strong disgust towards the monastic vows. She professed her willingness to spend her days in voluntary seclusion under the guardianship of her kind relative, but declared her repugnance to any compulsory engagement."

"Ah! indeed! did she so?" interrupted Evelyn; "there spoke the blood of the Fontaynes."

Sir William smiled. "The old marquis was

at first highly exasperated at your sister's contumelious obstinacy: he then listened with impatience to the exculpatory reasonings of the abbess; and, lastly, was won over by the persuasive eloquence of the fair but refractory nun, who was allowed to plead her own cause in person.

"The visits of the old gentleman became frequent at the convent; and Donna Isidora, who it seems had never heard the most melancholy part of her father's history, was unremitting in her dutiful attentions.

"Such was the progress of her influence, that the marquis was several times on the point of taking her away from the convent; but was dissuaded from this plan by the Lady Celestina, who had, doubtless, little reason to depend upon the rest of the family, and who dreaded to arouse their slumbering vengeance by this act of distinguishing patronage. The old man died some time afterwards, and bequeathed a considerable property to his grand-daughter, on condition that she bore the name of Guerilla. About a year ago Donna Isidora lost her valued friend, the abbess of Santa Maria, who, faithful to the trust reposed in her, had bespoken the interest of her majesty in favour of the poor orphan. The request was immediately granted, and Donna Isidora attached to the queen's household. In all temporal and

spiritual matters, therefore, you see, my lord, your sister is well provided for;—in the first place, by the tenour of her grandfather's will; and secondly, by her majesty's ghostly counsellor, who shrives the court damsels, and grants absolution for offences which (in justice to the fair fame of the inmates of Santa Maria) never came under cognizance of Donna Isidora's late spiritual adviser. Here ends my tale!" exclaimed Sir William, jocularly; "and this second adventure is but a sequel to that in which I was engaged years ago. Heaven knows how little calculated such a plain, un-heroic personage as myself is for a chivalric enterprise!—yet am I always thrusting my nose into an adventure!"

Evelyn, meantime, listened to this singular narrative like a person under some delusion.

"How strange is it that I should never have heard of all this before!" was the only reply he could make.

"I think your ignorance is naturally accounted for, my lord," returned Sir William, "when we consider every circumstance;—the family feud created by your father's first marriage—his sudden decease abroad—the vindictive spirit of those Guerillas, who made no scruple of sacrificing the fair fame of their relative;—lastly, if we take into account the attachment of Lady Celestina to your

sister, whom she had adopted from birth, and reared under her own eye, can we expect that, knowing your father only by name, and through the medium of ill-natured representation, she should gratuitously communicate facts tending to set aside her own claims upon her niece? As to your father, it is most probable that he wilfully concealed the affair till he should have an opportunity of explaining it personally; which opportunity, alas! never came. Can you wonder, then, my lord, at your own ignorance, when every trace, every medium of communication was thus suddenly destroyed?"

"I see it plainly," replied Evelyn; "and now I feel quite certain that my mother was ignorant as well. The only chance of her knowing was from my father's letters; and these I am sure she would instantly destroy, for she was a person of scrupulous integrity."

"Besides," returned Sir William, "his own knowledge of certain facts was so recent."

"True," replied Lord Fontayne; "I want no farther proofs. But why cannot I acknowledge Donna Isidora as my sister this instant? It will be hard to wait till prudence or propriety, or whatever you please to call the tiresome formalities of polite usage, gives the signal for us to fly into each other's arms."

“ My observation,” returned Sir William, “ only relates to a¹ public acknowledgment, which, as your sister does not bear your name, might cause unpleasant reflections.”

“ Perhaps so,” replied Evelyn, thoughtfully; “ and, as I have unfortunately no means of repairing my sister’s ruined fortunes, I have no right to make her sacrifice a splendid dowry for an empty name. Yet the change of name might be easily accounted for. It is not unusual to receive a bequest on such terms.”

“ But the legal proof of your father’s marriage is a difficulty not so soon got over,” replied Sir William. “ Keep the matter quiet, my lord. No one has any business with your private concerns. Do not, then, give the world a fair occasion of interfering in your family secrets. However certain *we* may be of your sister’s claims, it may not be so easy to satisfy an incredulous public, gaping for slander, and ready enough to revive old calumnies.—No, no!” said the baronet, emphatically; “ if one cares not for public opinion, there is no need to run one’s head violently against a post; and I have reasons, more than one, my dear young friend, for advising discretion on this point.”

“ But there is no objection to a private inter-

view, I suppose," returned Evelyn, "preparatory to our meeting, as indifferent acquaintance?"

"Certainly not," said Sir William: "I can easily procure you a regular introduction through the medium of the friend who gave me the intelligence you have just heard. She has apartments in the same palace, and I am ready to accompany you as soon as you like."

"To-morrow, then, let it be," said Lord Fontayne.

"With all my heart," replied the good-natured baronet.

Evelyn thanked him in few words, but in a manner so expressive of grateful feeling, that Sir William, as he pressed his hand, muttered in a querulous tone, "What's the matter with the boy? he must have been amongst a set of barbarians surely, when a slight kindness touches him so sensibly!"

CHAPTER IX.

'Tis not in mortals to command success ;
But we 'll do more, Sempronius—we 'll deserve it.

ADDISON.

It is the hour when they
Who love us are accustom'd to descend
Through the deep clouds o'er rocky Ararat.
How my heart beats !

BYRON'S HEAVEN AND EARTH.

WITH buoyant spirits and ardent anticipations, Lord Fontayne set out on the following morning for the residence of his newly-discovered relative.

On their way Sir William endeavoured to divert Evelyn's anxiety about the approaching interview by sundry court anecdotes, select passages of his own life, and a somewhat satirical portraiture of "the times."

“I have lived too long out of the country,” said he, “to take much interest in state cabals. I and my family have always been faithful to the reigning monarchy, and, as such, my interest at court may be serviceable as an introduction to, though not as a continuation of, your lordship’s senatorial career. To tell the truth, I shall make a better passport than a pilot, being more of a student than a politician, and a readier writer than fluent orator. Besides, I am of too sturdy a character to join either of the two conflicting factions which always agitate a constituent assembly. Truth, in my opinion, lies between two given points: now, the *worst* of it is, that, in spite of this acknowledged truism, you must needs stick to a point, right or wrong, in Parliament, and sometimes vote away your own conscience, if you cannot harden it against the galling reflection of deserting your own party; for it is the *party* and not the *cause*, which, nine times out of ten, is the point of honour. Your lordship recollects the ready excuse Hudibras puts into the mouth of placemen:

He that complies against his will
Is of his own opinion still,
Which he may adhere to, or disown,
For reasons to himself best known.”

Evelyn laughed. “ But you know I have no temptation to be so unprincipled,” said he, “ having at best a doubtful interest at court, since a recommendation, though it promise fair, may not have power to ensure an object, which, after all, depends upon individual caprice.”

“ But royal favour has in this instance anticipated your lordship,” returned Sir William, smiling.

“ How so ? ” inquired Evelyn. “ I once heard that his majesty had a personal antipathy to my father: it seems improbable, therefore, that he should extend his patronage to me.”

“ Ah ! my lord,” replied Sir William, “ our good-natured sovereign is by far too benevolent to visit ‘ the sins of the fathers upon the children,’ and the most improbable things, your lordship must know, often happen—things one could never dream would, by any natural cause, come to pass. How otherwise should his most benignant majesty have taken a sudden liking to the son of his sworn enemy, and his majesty’s consort taken it into her head to patronise a female branch of the same obnoxious root ? Truly, there are strange mysteries in life,” continued the facetious baronet. “ It seems as if one generation spent its time, Penelope-like, in undoing the webs and meshes which a former one had been at so much trouble

to weave. My Lord Bacon says in his Moral Essays, ‘some men do—’ but I perceive your lordship’s attention is wandering from the subject in question,” said the baronet, slightly piqued at Evelyn’s abstraction; “and so to the practical illustration of the high chancellor’s remarks. His majesty is a notorious lover of fun, and a very Haroun al Raschid for adventures incog. At the risk of hearing many unpleasant truths, he takes a singular pleasure in peeping through the windows of other men’s hearts; and nothing pleases him better than rough valour, homespun honesty, and blunt independence, particularly if connected with any thing of the ludicrous, so as to take off the edge of the satire, and give his royal humour free scope for retaliation. Bluff, swaggering highwayman courage, has even been known to take the priority in his favour over sterling merit, as in the case of Colonel Blood.”

“I hope,” replied Evelyn, haughtily, “my claims to so high a distinction do not rest upon any supposed analogy between my character and that of his majesty’s knave-retainer; if so, I fear the merits upon which my pretensions are founded will not bear a comparison with so glorious a precedent.”

“Now don’t take fire at a word, my good friend,” replied Sir William; “the excess of a

virtue becomes a vice. Your lordship comes under the strict letter of the rule, not under its more unlimited acceptation. To be plain—your petulance in the park amused his majesty, and your sturdy independence did not displease him. He asked me who you were, desired me to bring you to court, and made numerous other inquiries, all tending to prove the great interest he took in you. So you see, my lord, what accidents make or mar one's good fortune. Jealousy, for instance, made the king your father's enemy, and a mere whim has created him your friend—at least with all favourable dispositions to that effect. Time, which wears away all things, has smoothed the edge of his resentment, and, to let you into a secret, your father's quarrel arose from a mere private personal pique, entertained by the prince against a successful rival, heightened and aggravated by wilful misrepresentation. A more favourable issue might have been expected from a decisive battle, where the two combatants were fairly pitched against each other ; but it was the consummate art of malevolence to ward off the cannonade which might have passed off in a harmless explosion, by keeping up a constant fire of small grape-shot. They knew too well that your father, like all persons of an ardent temperament, was best wounded in ambuscade. His enemies

dreaded a collision, which, by bringing his generous qualities into exercise, might have restored his wonted influence over a prince on the eve of sovereign power.

“ But,” returned Lord Fontayne, “ where quarrels are to be decided by open combat, there should be that equality in age and station which authorises the use of similar weapons of defence, otherwise it is not a fair trial of skill. On this account, I have no ambition to become the favourite of a prince. I respect my own rights too much to act the supple courtier ; and, as to friendship, it does not suit my notions of the social compact to have my humour kept at arm’s-length, ready to draw in its horns whenever the regal signal shall announce foul weather abroad.”

Sir William laughed heartily. “ Depend upon it,” said he, “ these are the sentiments of an incipient courtier, my lord : affect to despise honours, and they will be showered upon you. Indifference to worldly grandeur is the sure way to procure it. Diogenes in his tub was a sight for an emperor ; and the ancients, who spurned the regal purple, knew that their best recommendation to popular favour lay in their not being ‘ won unsought.’ ”

Evelyn made no reply to this indirect satire upon his hasty and somewhat self-confident as-

sertion, and the baronet resumed his observations, yet in a graver and more didactic form.

“ In the first setting out of life, my dear Evelyn,” said he, “ it is difficult to say what we shall be. A thousand changes take place in the world, and innumerable revolutions are silently operating upon our own minds. These may, and must affect a corresponding change of sentiment ; so that to preserve a purity of principle, and simplicity of intention, it is absolutely necessary that we attach ourselves to no particular party, that we be choice in our associates, nor lay ourselves under a fancied obligation to repay private favours by the sacrifice of public utility. Perhaps it may be, that the natural warmth of my temper is at the bottom of all this vaunted show of independence. Who can vouch for the perfection of their motives ? Yet, though there are times (the present for instance) in which I can enter into Lord Bacon’s nice distinction between simulation and dissimulation, I am inclined to give the preference to straightforward, unbending, uncompromising honesty, and the fate of that illustrious statesman confirms my own theory. With some of the qualifications, though none of the taste for a politician,” continued Sir William, “ I do not think it right to relinquish the opportunity of serving my country. If I cannot guide the helm, my

feeble breath may help to fill the sail. I have opposed many acts of his majesty's administration, in which the national honour seemed likely to be compromised ; some, with success—in others I have failed ; for, in your lordship's ear, never before was so gentle a courtier, and so despotic a sovereign united in one person. With manners the most affable, and acts the most imperious, the king continues to balance the nation upon a feather, whilst, I grieve to say, the vicious example of his court has travelled from one extremity of the kingdom to another. Nevertheless, as a private individual, I love and admire him ; as the legitimate offspring of our martyred sovereign, I will stand by his throne to the last hour of my existence."

Evelyn admired the justice, propriety, and genuine patriotism of Sir William Temple, as much as he had been pleased with his amiable, social qualities.

"Here," thought he, "is no servile idolater at the altar of custom, content to receive opinions upon credit, and pass them on to others, without examining into the sterling value of the current coin in circulation. Here is an English senator, who can love his king, and be true to his country at the same time!"

Lord Fontayne was little aware that the grand

secret of Sir William's success at court arose, in a great measure, from his never giving an offensive prominence to the native independence of his character. An arrogant dictatorial spirit was highly obnoxious to the king, who was more easily fretted and galled with perpetual contradictions, than by occasional conscientious and decided opposition.

“ I wonder if I shall ever be an orator,” thought Lord Fontayne, as he followed his friend up the narrow staircase, which wound round the tower of the old palace ; but other thoughts took possession of his mind upon hearing Sir William inquire for the Marchioness of D'Alvargo's apartments, at the same time whispering in his ear—

“ Perhaps you will wait here a few minutes, my lord, till I have apprised your sister ; our visit will appear too abrupt.”

Evelyn assented to the request, and sat down upon one of the window-seats in the gallery. The soldiers were drawn out in the palace-yard, and Evelyn watched them going through their military evolutions under the command of a sturdy veteran, whose stentorian voice made the very walls tremble. The flashing of swords, the glitter of burnished helmets, together with the martial strains of war-inspiring melody, at intervals broken by the rude clang of the clarion, kindled a

momentary enthusiasm for the noble profession of arms.

“ I ought to be a hero,” said Lord Fontayne, proudly, “ for I am the descendant of a host of warriors. Their fire is not yet extinguished.—Ah ! and I will prove it before I die ! What should hinder me ?”

This magnanimous resolution put Evelyn upon a variety of considerations how and in what manner such a laudable intent was to be executed, and the fourth plan was upon the eve of being abandoned to the fate of its predecessors just as Sir William Temple made his appearance.

“ Your sister,” said he, “ requires no other proof of your relationship than the strong resemblance you bear to your father. She is a charming person, and waits with impatience to see you.”

Evelyn started up from the window-seat ; a warm glow rushed to his cheek, his heart throbbed violently, and the tremulous agitation of his footsteps betrayed the feelings he strove to controul. Sir William stopped at the end of the long gallery, gave a light tap at the door, and, announcing Lord de la Fontayne, left Evelyn to make his own advances. Neither party were slow in availing themselves of the opportunity thus offered. Isidora advanced to meet her brother with a half

shy, half anxious step, a deep flush overspread the olive of her brilliant complexion, and her dark eyes were suffused with tears, as Evelyn, tenderly embracing her, whispered “ My sister ! unknown, but thrice welcome to my home and heart !”

“ Dear brother !” exclaimed Isidora, as, with her head resting upon his bosom, the coursing tears streamed through her black eye-lashes. “ Dearest friend, how I shall love you ! my heart acknowledged you at first sight. Ah ! there must have been a sympathetic chord, which only slumbered for a time. Yet wherefore,” added she, shaking back her dark flowing ringlets, and seating Evelyn by her side, “ tell me—what for should joy have the same language as grief ?”

“ And wherefore should it have no language at all, *ma belle sœur* ?” said he, smiling at his sister’s broken English, and curious inversion of sentences, which, to avoid the appearance of affectation, we forbear to transcribe literally. “ Much as I longed to know you, and dearly as I feel I shall love you, I can scarcely find words to say so.”

“ You are English, brother,” replied Isidora, “ and England is a cold land. They have but one common meaning of that *leetle* verb they call ‘ love.’ They do not understand all its different

conjugations, nor half its delicate moods and tenses."

"It is, nevertheless, an active verb with us," said Evelyn, archly; "sometimes reflective too, but not very often reciprocal;" and his brow became overcast."

"O! you sober English are so deep," replied Donna Isidora, gaily; "and so proud, there is no making you confess your sins."

"I am a heretic, you know," said Evelyn; "but let us not quarrel about the road to heaven, Isidora."

"Not for the sake of heaven itself, my dear brother, would I do any such a thing," cried she, with warmth. "Rather let us endeavour to make a heaven upon earth by our mutual good offices."

After the first emotions had subsided, Evelyn drew from the lips of his sister an outline of her uneventful life. It was a history of simple occupations, and religious observances, mingled with heartfelt tears of gratitude to the memory of the benevolent Lady Celestina. The old marquis she described as a stern, proud, but affectionate personage, whose presence, much as she revered him for the virtues he took so much pains to conceal, Isidora confessed she never approached without trembling. Many of the fair sisters also came in

for their share of regret, particularly one Donna Laura Angelique Rosalva, who had taken the veil only a short time previous to Isidora's departure from the convent.

“ It was the sight of this dreadful sacrifice, my dear brother,” said she, “ which determined me never to take the last vows. I could bear to live a practical nun, but not a professional one,” said she, smiling ; “ though it is not a matter of sport, I can assure you. When I saw the fatal scissors which severed from her fair brow the luxuriant tresses of my lovely friend, now profanely scattered in the dust, as, in the ardour of her religious zeal, she stamped upon the devoted offering—when I beheld the nuptial ring placed upon her finger, and listened to the pealing anthem, whose proud strains triumphantly hailed her as the bride of Heaven, ah ! brother, what a death-chill came over me!—my knees shook together—the floral offering dropped from my hands—cold dews bathed my forehead, and the fragrant clouds of costly incense seemed like the suffocating steam of poisonous exhalations. For, O, my brother !” continued Isidora, floods of tears gathering around her dark orbs, “ spite of Laura’s impasioned dedication to the Holy Church, I knew that her affections were riveted upon an earthly object, and that this solemn renunciation could

never shut out from her eyes the image of her despairing lover. I knew all she must feel when the delusion had vanished ; but expostulation was vain ; she repelled my tears, my prayers, my caresses, as the artful suggestions of the archfiend, and the wretched victim of ambition voluntarily denied herself the consolations of sympathy and friendship—shut herself up in the gloom of a remote cell, and secretly practised those austerities which are only enjoined by our holy church as penance for the most atrocious offences."

" And did you leave her under this terrible delusion ?" inquired Evelyn, sympathising in the grief which the remembrance of her friend recalled in Isidora's bosom.

" Ah ! that was worse than all the rest," replied she. " The dear enthusiast refused to see me, alleging that she had taken an eternal farewell at the foot of the altar. To soften the disappointment, she wrote a few lines expressive of her regret at being compelled to renounce all future communication with me, gently hinting that my apostasy (so she termed my rejection of the veil) had loosened the only tie which could bind us together on this frail earth ;—that we had chosen too different paths ;—she, the rugged, thorny steep of repentance, and I, the flowery path of perdition. Such a letter ! such an adieu !"

exclaimed Isidora ; “ I shall never forget it. I slept not for two whole nights afterwards.”

“ Who could practise upon her credulity by making her suck in such absurd dogmas ? ” cried Evelyn, with indignation—“ the old abbess ? ”

“ O no ! ” replied Donna Isidora, “ Lady Celestina was no bigot ; the influence arose, I suspect, from a very different quarter, and was exerted over Laura’s mind to no good purpose, at the instigation of Father — ; but the Holy Virgin save me ! ” cried she, with an expression of nervous apprehension. “ If you were to be so imprudent as to mention what I have been saying, not all her majesty’s power could save me from the terrors of the Inquisition.”

To Donna Isidora’s great surprise, Evelyn burst into a violent fit of laughter. “ Don’t be angry with me, *ma belle sœur*,” said he, “ I’m a strange mortal, and seldom can compose my flexible physiognomy into any fixed expression ; do as I will, truant thoughts get loose ; bright ideas twinkle amidst gloomy subjects, like stars in a dark night, and the whole machinery of eyes, lips, and cheek, are set in villainous motion ; and the present subject was irresistible.”

“ What ! the Inquisition ? ” cried Donna Isidora, with a look of terror.

“ Yes, the Inquisition,” returned Evelyn, coolly.

“ Why should I not laugh at it? supposing it were only to show my dimple, Love’s favourite nestling-place, that hole in my cheek, Isidora; it is an hereditary gift, and betokens a triplicity of alliterative qualities, good-nature, grace, and gentleness. I put *gentleness* last on the list, as being the most doubtful portion of my inheritance.”

“ Dear brother, smile again,” said Donna Isidora, with looks of beaming admiration; “ but pray don’t laugh at the Inquisition before the marchioness. She is such a grave old woman! All the ladies of her majesty’s court are Catholics, though, out of complaisance towards the national faith, they keep their opinions as private as possible. What a cameleon face!” continued she, as, watching the changeful expression of her brother’s countenance, its almost instantaneous transition from mirth to sadness, forcibly arrested her attention. “ Evelyn, you are the very image of the strange being I just remember coming to the convent when I was a child, and smothering me with his caresses. Now we are talking about likenesses, here is our father’s picture, which he left for me in Lady Celestina’s care.”

As she spoke, Isidora walked across the room to unlock an Indian cabinet, from a drawer of which she produced a miniature highly executed,

of a cavalier in the full court dress of Charles the First, and surmounted with diamonds. "It is our father, without doubt," cried Evelyn, gazing eagerly upon it, "though I scarcely remember him. I believe it is the very same picture I have heard my mother so often lament, observing that she would part with half her fortune to redeem this single article from the wreck of my father's personal effects. There is nothing left of him but a wretched daub of a portrait, which hangs in what was my mother's bed-chamber at Norman Abbey. You will go down with me there, Isidora?" said Evelyn, inquiringly. "I will invite the dowager, and persuade Sir William to accompany us also."

"I long to see the priory above all things," replied Donna Isidora; "my curiosity is very great—very enormous."

Evelyn laughed heartily. "Why, what do you fancy it to be?"

"Why," returned Donna Isidora, with a grave simplicity, which amused her brother vastly, "Sir William Temple says it is like the places one reads of in romance. So I suppose there is a fortified tower, and a moat, and a drawbridge, and—"

"Hobgoblins innumerable!" interrupted Evelyn. "Nay, don't be terrified; they wear the peaceful

garb of your profession ; so you should look upon these spectral monks and nuns as good-natured friendly visitants ; but, Isidora, what if they should reproach you for your apostasy ? I shudder,” and Evelyn shrugged up his shoulders, “ to think of your probable fate, Isidora. Methinks I see you hurried along those cloistered aisles, between the aerial embraces of two corpulent-looking friars, and deposited for life in the donjon-keep on bread and water diet. Awful catastrophe !—but you look serious, *ma belle sœur.*”

“ All the sisters at Villanova,” replied Donna Isidora, “ firmly believe in apparitions, and dreams, and visions.”

“ O ! I forgot,” said Evelyn, “ that you have been brought up in the full belief of supernatural agency. I beg pardon, Isidora ; but it is the craft of the sect. Now, for your consolation and greater beatitude, tradition has favoured the house of La Fontayne with a seraph minstrel, who occasionally serenades us with the music of the spheres ; it is true as I live.”

Donna Isidora looked unutterable things at this intelligence ; but Evelyn did not increase her surprise by a detail of the less agreeable phantom which had so much alarmed himself. Evelyn told his sister all his plans ;—his intention of going abroad, so soon as he could find an agreeable

companion *par nécessité*, as his extremely limited income would not allow him to live upon his estate at present. "To tell you the truth, Isidora," said he, "Lord —— has taken possession of the priory for the next five years; but, if you like to go down there, our party are sure of a most hearty welcome, as his lordship professes a most profound reverence for our illustrious house, and is a truly hospitable fellow."

The conversation now turned upon Lord Fontayne's future plans. Donna Isidora hoped he would not go abroad at present. On the contrary, she warmly advised him to cultivate the graces, and conciliate the favour of the sovereign, whom she assured him was exceedingly good-natured. In addition to this advice, (the propriety of which might be doubted, in the view Donna Isidora took,) she gave him a list of the reigning court favourites, and, in the ardour of her discourse, betrayed more than common interest in a certain Earl of Rochford, whom Evelyn knew only by name. The conversation lasted so long, Lord Fontayne forgot that his friend was all this time in waiting. The palace clock had twice sounded the hour of the day ere he arose to depart.

"Adieu for the present, my dear sister! Tomorrow we shall meet as common acquaintance. I have told you the reasons for concealing our

relative connexion at present; but an intercourse may soon very naturally ripen into an unreserved intimacy: but pray," said Evelyn, turning back, "let me not lose a sister before I can claim her as such; and, above all, Isidora, let not the pensive nun be transformed to a court *intriguante*."

CHAPTER X.

Man may despoil his brother man of all;
— but a heart
That loves without self-love—'tis here—now prove it.

BYRON.

O ! life is a waste of wearisome hours,
Which seldom the rose of enjoyment adorns,
And the heart which is soonest awake to the flow'rs
Is always the first to be touch'd by the thorns.

MOORE.

THE bitters and sweets of life are more equitably mingled in our cup than we are, at first sight, willing to allow. The just ordination of an all-wise Providence appoints to every man his due proportion of both ; the former, to check the arrogant march of presumption, and the latter to inspire a feeling of filial confidence, and cheerful, unhesitating dependence upon the Supreme Arbiter of good and ill.

Whilst Lord Fontayne was rejoicing in the discovery of a new and interesting connexion, the decree was pronouncing, which came to sever, at one stroke, those invisible ties which had “grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength.”

Miss Dunmore, who sincerely sympathised in his disappointment, was not sorry that a fit of sickness furnished her with a convenient excuse to absent herself from a scene altogether repugnant to her present feelings. The rumour of Miss Fontayne’s gay nuptials, and its confirmation by her own hand, accompanied by showers of bridal presents, brought a strange uneasy feeling to the sensitive mind of Rose. Bertha’s first expressions were all rapture, pure, unalloyed bliss: then came a drawback. It was the parting with her mother, (her best, her earliest friend, whose ministering hand had anticipated every want,) now compelled to seek a new home with the object of her imprudent choice.

“She loves me too well,” wrote the self-condemning heiress, “to reproach me for my undutifulness; yet I fear it deserves to be punished; never through Lionel, though, I am convinced: he is all generosity, and I feel assured his love will repay me for every sacrifice.”

Rose folded the letter up again, and fell into

a train of reflections upon the capricious freaks of the blind deity. "What a splendid destiny has she missed!" thought Rose, "and for what?—to be the short-lived theme of senseless adoration; the butterfly of an hour; the flower of the gay parterre, plucked with avidity, and thrown away with contempt when its bright colours are flown! She, who might have won to virtue, and restrained from vice, a heart all her own;—a heart too proud for the security of its own happiness, yet too tender to resist her gentle influence;—a heart where the sweet odour of her graces would have been enshrined even when their brilliancy was gone.

Raising herself from a depression of spirits which threatened to destroy her peace by its insidious encroachments, Miss Dunmore directed her attention to those active pursuits she had, from her illness, almost entirely neglected.

"Life is too precious," thought she, "to be sacrificed at the shrine of an idle fancy. Time is a talent to be laid out upon interest, and leisure is a gift for which I shall, one day, be accountable. If I have been deceived, for a moment, into the worship of false gods, the delusion is over. The Count de Villeneuve has ceased to be the *beau ideal* of my noblest. conceptions.

Alas ! he was, unquestionably, the mere creature of fancy."

Rose drew from under her pillow the heartless production which had called forth these sentiments. Few were the lines, but those few, like poisoned arrows, had shot their malignity through the tender heart of Rose. Instead of the long expected explanation, or at least an apologetic anodyne to soothe the irritations of wounded delicacy, the letter briefly stated the "regret entertained by the count for the vast difference of sentiment which existed between them ; concluding with a wish, formally expressed, that Miss Dunmore might experience every happiness which it was in the power of her hostile sentiments to bestow."

Rose read the letter over and over again without comprehending, for a long time, the meaning it would convey. Her first idea was that the count's pride revolted at her suspicions ; but, as she very justly thought, "if love could not see the propriety of my decision, reason ought to have respected the motive." Again she perused the hasty scrawl ; its implied satire, its sarcastic tone, its cold compression into one measured sentence, struck her in a new light, and she essayed to tear it into a thousand fragments.

"No," said she to herself, "I will not destroy

this token of true love, a love of so many weeks' growth; it will cure me of a thousand follies. This artful snare, however, shall not betray me into another unguarded exculpation; I will disdain to justify myself; yet—to be silent—to sit down coolly with such an affront, is a tacit acknowledgment that I deserve it."

Many were the letters Miss Dunmore composed under these conflicting feelings, and still more numerous those she indited during the sleepless hours of midnight; all of them *chef-d'œuvres* of epistolary merit, alternately glowing with eloquent reproach, or melting into tender relentings; and the flowers of rhetoric which, in her broken slumbers, Morpheus profusely scattered upon her dreams, were not the least impressive of her visionary attempts to reclaim a mind long abandoned to the reckless indulgence of sensual passion. The valedictory letter, the result of much deliberation, was at length despatched. It entered at length into the reasons by which Rose had been gradually led to adopt a style of intercourse which her better judgment rejected—reasons which had their origin in a generous interest, inspired by the count's political misfortunes, and a credulous reliance upon his honour and generosity. The letter also contained a valuable assortment of such moral and religious maxims as, in the

simplicity of her feelings, Rose thought most applicable to the station and character of the count, and which she had no doubt would be equally efficacious with the good advice he had so gratefully received from her own lips.

The count's reply was more in the language of the aggrieved than the aggressor; indirectly accusing Rose of coquetry in the expression of feelings which he had taken so much pains to elicit, his letter concluded with these provoking words: "I am the only sufferer!" a sentence which poor Rose, as a practical refutation of its falsehood, blotted out with her tears.

Meantime the adventure of Monsieur le Comte de Villeneuve with the fair Angloise became a subject of much amusement in the elegant saloons of Paris, and many a lively sally was expended upon the affair, by persons whose good taste would have shunned the subject upon a nearer approach. Amongst these worthies, a comparison was instantly set afloat on the most desirable mode of gallantry; the appeal (finally made to a noted *chevalier du guet*, whose success with the fair sex rendered him an undoubted authority) decided, that, of all methods, that *par l'escalade* was least eligible. Vollies of satirical applause ensued throughout the gay circle, for it was more than suspected that the handsome chevalier had

very narrowly escaped the Inquisition in a rash attempt to carry away a nun from the other side of the Pyrenees. The promoter and chief assistant in these elegant devices *pour passer le temps*, to do him justice, had a secret disrelish to the mirth which the sparks of his own wit had kindled ; and though he sought, like Cæsar of old, to cover his defeat with the semblance of a victory, the brilliancy of the *jeu d'esprit* did not compensate for its heartlessness. Yet had he been too long the slave of vicious custom to resist its unhappy influence. Like too many of the brave, the gallant, the highly gifted of the profligate court of Louis the Fourteenth, he continued to squander the richest gifts of Heaven upon the shrine of unhallowed joys.

With talents that might have reflected honour upon himself, and glory upon his country, with a native taste for all that was great and praiseworthy, and a quick perception of genuine excellence, the Count de Villeneuve voluntarily sacrificed these splendid advantages for the brief and unsubstantial honours of a frivolous, vain-glorious career ; alike abandoning the toilsome path of ambition, the honourable pursuit of hard-earned, legitimate fame, or the more disinterested efforts of patriotism, for the pitiful triumph of glancing in the midnight assembly, the *ignis fatuus* of the

deluded and deluding fair ; disputing the palm of victory with the inventor of some fashionable absurdity ; or, which was not unfrequently the case, plunging heedlessly into the excesses of sensual indulgence ! In vain was the careless hand of improvident bounty stretched forth to save him from such debasement ! Faithless to that warning voice, his short-lived devotion became not, as it might have been, the redeeming page of his dark history—a treasured spot of fertility, cheering to the dim eye in the sere and yellow leaf of withered enjoyments !

In the midst of his proudest triumphs the Count de Villeneuve could not refrain a sigh to the memory of one whose love, unlike that of the gay flutterers around him, had been won by the noblest sympathies, and lost by the icy breath of neglect !

Secretly despising the homage which his elegant person, attractive manners, and sparkling wit excited, his thoughts would involuntarily revert towards the gentle being whose entire, unlimited confidence had only yielded to a principle which he could not fail to respect.

“ And how have I shown my gratitude,” thought he, “ towards one to whom I was endeared by circumstances which would have been a repellant to many of her sex ? She saw, or

fancied, at least, that I was on the brink of a precipice, ready to be hurled into an abyss of ruin ; yet she chose to share my fate, with only one reservation ! And what hindered me from complying with the conditions she laid down ? Nothing—nothing but an arrogant pride, which spurned the slightest constraint in its wayward movements, and a contemptible coquetry, whose capricious impulses, stimulated by the love of novelty, rendered me insensible to a fixed devotion !”

Although nothing hardens the heart so much as habitual self-indulgence, these rebukes of conscience were, of themselves, the certain indication of a mind superior to its low aims.

The fine understanding of the count, beclouded as it was by the mists of passion, was yet alive to virtuous impressions. His remorse, therefore, was proportionably severe, as his aberrations were more glaring ; and the transient gaiety which sparkled around him was but the deceitful glare of an electric flash, giving terror and effect to the succeeding darkness.

Rose, on the contrary, with all her sorrows, and to such a mind they were not trifling, (for what mind of sensibility regrets not the pure emotions connected with first love, however misapplied ?) Rose—was comparatively happy. She was better satisfied, after all, to be the “ sinned

against than the sinning ;" and, although the cruel alternative brought with it much pain, it was an evil which time and reflection would gradually ameliorate. Yet the task was severe. The feverish throb of burning pride, the biting anguish of a heart smarting under the inflictions of injustice, were not quelled by the proud dictates of stoical philosophy, but worn away by constant, persevering efforts of self-control.

Conscious of her own weakness, which, under the fatal plea of expediency, had beguiled her into an act of criminal concealment, Rose denied herself the ordinary fuel which, in most cases, serves to keep alive the vital spark of feeling. After the needful explanation to her friend Edith, the count's name was never once named by her ; and Edith applauded her magnanimous resolution with the same eagerness with which she had formerly urged Rose to cultivate his acquaintance.

" It is strange," thought the latter, " with what facility she glides into opposite trains of thinking ! "

The affair was consigned to as much oblivion as such unthankful subjects deserve, but do not always meet with ; and the unamiable suspicion, too often attendant upon awakened credulity, vanished before the experience of an improved and ripened judgment.

The attention of Rose, fortunately for herself,

was diverted from her own private regrets to the contemplation of Lord Fontayne's affairs. His long-promised letter had arrived, containing an account of his proceedings, and a full-length portrait of his newly discovered relative.

“ She has all the simplicity of a nun,” wrote Evelyn, “ with the full-formed manners of a gentlewoman. Her native impulses are, gentleness, timidity, and flexibility; but the constant habit of mingling with persons of high rank and elegant breeding has given her that nice tact and perfect peerless dignity of manner to be expected only from the associate of a queen.”

Rose put down the letter at this sentence, and insensibly recalled a very interesting conversation which had passed between the Count de Ville-neuve and herself on this topic.

“ Lord Fontayne's mind,” thought she, “ has the true aristocratic bend—a constant leaning towards the prejudices which connect certain qualities with certain stations in society. With all his liberality on other points, Evelyn was always prone to the error of confounding these exterior appearances—the result of artificial distinctions—the arbitrary rules of society—with native elevation of character, without considering that the charm of every quality depends more or less upon the propriety of its application. Thus, for in-

stance, a person depressed in outward circumstances, however refined his feelings—however acute his perceptions—whatever true nobility of soul he may possess, does not feel himself justified by the usages of society in assuming those external marks of dignity, which, in connexion with a more exalted station, he would feel no difficulty to support. The count thought differently, (here poor Rose heaved a sigh to the bright side of her lover's character,) and he had no temptation to despise the privileges of rank, nor had he any interest in flattering me, as I claim kindred with Evelyn. He agreed with me in condemning these conventional constitutions, though he granted their utility as a political institution, since these hereditary privileges keep up the balance of society by making up the deficiency of sterling merit. 'I have seen in humble life,' remarked he, 'grace, delicacy, high polish of manners, which would have adorned a court; and, *au contraire*, in the upper ranks—coarseness, rudeness, vulgarity, and qualities whose grossness we are accustomed to associate with the lowest forms of society. *Feelings*, after all, create manners; where these are delicate, high-minded, and sincere, the expression of them will produce a correspondent superiority of manner. Some situations may be more favourable to the culture of these qualities; but education

can never produce them where the vital germ is wanting!"

"What a pity," thought Rose, as these sentiments crossed her mind,—"what a thousand pities people cannot act up to their better judgment!"

In the midst of these cogitations Miss Dunmore was startled by the intelligence that a new occupant had taken possession of the priory. Her indisposition had prevented her visits of late; but, convinced that there must be some mistake, she instantly set off to make farther inquiries from the old housekeeper, whose information she judged, erroneously, must be authentic. When Rose reached the priory, all was confusion and uproar. Unpacked baggage filled the hall. Strange faces and strange sounds greeted her on every side, and she was turning away with sensations of grief and surprise, when the welcome sound of Ralph's voice reached her ears.

"Mercy on us, madam! is it you?" said the old man, with a disconsolate look. "Who could have thought, now, of the young lord serving us such a trick? I, who have been forty years in the family come next Shrove Tuesday, to think of turning out at my time of life; and such a flitting too! and there's Margery, too, ready to cry her eyes out with passion. Old Peter's well off; it's my belief, though he is underground, he won't rest

long to see such goings on. Lack-a-daisy ! it 's enough to make a body grow crazed." Rose inquired for Mattie.

" Mattie, my lady, is gone to the old home-
stead."

" Gone ! gone away from the priory ?" echoed Rose, with surprise.

" Ah ! to be sure," returned Ralph, with a look of senseless apathy, " what must she do else ? the stranger folk weren't bound to take care of an old creature like her. She 's of no manner of use about a house, but to tell a set of old-fashioned stories ; an' I warrant ye, madam, the new gentry 'll find something better to listen to, if they stay long enough ;" and Ralph looked mysterious.

" And is Andrew gone too ?" said Rose.

" Ah ! the devil take him for one of his imps ! a graceless cub him ! he was always a queer-tempered lad, but latterly he got an inkling, somehow or other, that he was the old lord's son ; and, since he went away, idle, good-for-nothing folks told him as how he ought to have had all Norman Abbey estates, and Ravenstede, and the old manor of Dunmore to boot ; and it 's made him half crazed. Mattie says he gets no rest by night or by day, and falls on sorely with her for letting it go out of her hands.

It 's very true, to be sure," continued Ralph, "the old lord left him a very decent maintenance, and Mattie some acres of ground ; but the money like, wasn't forthcomin' at my lord's death, an' the rest o' the property was gotten shut of among Mattie's relations. Margery says it serves her right, for 'what 's got over the devil's back is sure to be spent under his belly ;' but, to my thinking, it 's a very hard case."

" But where are you going ?" inquired Miss Dunmore.

" Why, you see, madam," answered Ralph, a little reluctantly, we 've got a snug farm to go to. Margery 's fond of lookin' after the beasts, and stirrin' about does her old bones good. I don't know but it may be quite as well for us. The young lord never seems to settle long in a place, an' it 's none so pleasant to live in such a wild, lonely old place without good cheer an' jovial company. It wasn't so in former times. Heigho ! after all, I don't much like the thoughts of leaving the old spot," said the poor old man, looking round him sorrowfully ; " but you see, madam, I 'd rather God speed at once, than stay to put up wi' Margery's grumblins. We might have had leave to stay in the old part ; but you see we 've saved a bit of money, an' the Lord knows what may become of it, if we stay any longer un-

der a falling roof. Margery says so, however ; an' you see, my leddy, I 'm tied neck an' heels ; so there 's nothing for me but to make the best of a bad bargain."

And with this salvo to his feelings, Ralph prepared to quit a place to which he had been so long and firmly rooted. Yet it was evident to Rose that the plucking up of old habits and old associations was painful. He made a thousand indirect blundering apologies for his apostasy, and it was plain to see that it required all the exercise of his wife's virago influence to carry the outward man away from a place, where the limited faculties of the inner one had so long found their appropriate sphere of action.

" We might have kept our situations," continued Ralph ; " but Margery vowed she 'd have no minx of a young missis for ever at her heels, an' I 'm not so gain at business as I was ; besides, it doesn't seem natural to serve any but a Fontayne : moreover, I could not make up my mind to sort wi' strange serving-men."

Ralph suppressed part of the truth, which was, that the support and care of the old housekeeper formed one of the conditions upon which he was to take the farm at a reduced rate. To this agreement Ralph, who was naturally good-natured, willingly consented ; but his wife grew so quarrel-

some whenever the subject was named, that Mattie, partly from fear of her sarcastic reflections, and partly from the dread of living under the same roof with a person of such a tyrannical temper, when she had the choice of another home before her, was induced to make a voluntary surrender of her rights.

Miss Dunmore's letter to Lord Fontayne contained a long and eloquent statement of the facts which had so recently come to her knowledge. It brought a prompt and indignant reply from Evelyn, who disclaimed the idea of having neglected the old woman, and expressed great astonishment that Ralph and Margery should have acted so contrary to his orders. This worthy couple excused themselves by throwing all the blame upon Mattie's pertinacious independence ; who, they observed, "wouldn't be beholden to nobody ; an' her relations had the biggest right to do for her, because the homestead was as good as her own, seeing as it was her money as had bought it."

Here the matter rested ; and Rose was obliged to be contented with hoping that the relation whom Mattie had brought up at her own expense would consider it her duty, as well as pleasure, to return her kindness by cherishing her in her old age.

CHAPTER XI.

Must I consume my life—this little life—
In guarding against all may make it less ?
It is not worth so much.

BYRON'S SARDANAPALUS.

You may as well spread out the unsunn'd heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on opportunity.

MILTON'S COMUS.

IT was early one morning in the spring that Miss Dunmore set off to the farm-house, where the old domestic of Norman Abbey had taken shelter. The days were yet cold and bleak, though troops of women and children were hard at work weeding upon the barren uplands of the neighbouring fields, where the green blade of the springing corn was so imperfectly developed, that none but an experienced eye could detect the difference

between the tender grain and the worthless produce of the marly soil. Rose found the door of the house fastened, and, after repeated ineffectual knockings, was going away, when a little rosy-faced urchin, peeping out of an out-house, where he had been searching for eggs, called out hastily, “An ye want mistress, they’re aw gone out to the barley clo-ase.”

Rose laid an immediate embargo on little Robin’s services, and on their way to the field asked him a variety of indifferent questions. Robin trudged on before her with sturdy independence and choice frugality of speech, his awkward shyness giving way by degrees to the affability of his companion. In answer to her inquiries about himself, Robin entered into a more minute detail.

“An’ ple—ase ye, mistress, oi tents the sheep, an’ scaures the crows away, an’ drives the plough, an’ guse wi’ Tummus to supper up the be—asts, an’ sarves the pigs, an’ o’ winter neeghts I helps our dame to card the wool an’ wind the yarn.”

Robin’s tongue once let loose, went on of its own accord, and kept pace with his swinging gait, till they had reached the barley-field. Here, amongst a variety of labourers of different ages and sex, Rose spied poor Mattie.

“I get ower donsie,” said she, throwing down

a handful of weeds, and respectfully saluting Rose ; “ but ye see I ettle at it a wee bit.” Miss Dunmore drew the old woman aside, and presented her with the first-fruits of a quarterly allowance, which Lord Fontayne promised to remit to her regularly.

“ My lord is verra gude,” said Mattie ; “ it ’s a needfu’ blessin’ ; for I canna do muckle towards eañnin’ my ain livelihood, an’ the bairn Andrew ’s a sair hindrance to me. They do nae mair than gie me a corner by the hearthstane, and a potato or twa is a’ the victuals I get fra aebody, for ye ken I wadna be a burden to ither folk ;” and Mattie wiped away a rising tear with the corner of her apron. “ But ye ’ll gang up till the house,” said she, with that habitual good feeling which always led her to consider others in preference to herself. “ Ilka ane is asteer, an’ we ’ll fand a pickle o’ somethin’ to ait, hinny.”

When they reached the homestead, Mattie carefully unlocked the door, and busied herself in seeking refreshments, with numberless apologies for the frugality of the repast.

Miss Dunmore satisfied the good woman that her walk had given her an appetite which would relish the homeliest fare ; and, gratified with her readiness to be pleased, Mattie, at the request of her visitor, seated herself by her side.

“ Have you ever been up to the abbey since the new people came ?” inquired Rose.

“ I, my leddy ?” answered Mattie, with a stare of surprise ; “ I gang up till the priory !—ha ! ha ! They that hae kent the sweet singin’ o’ the mavis winna bear the skirl o’ the corbies i’ their lugs. I’m sairly doited, but I canna fleeche to strange bluid ; troth, I am na souple o’ that gait. I dinna like the feckless tawpees’ glowrin’ at me wi’ their bauld een, or the flunkies, (daft chields,) blinkin’ at ane anither, and geckin’ a’ the while they suld gang about their ain concerns. It was na sae i’ my time ; but, alack ! my sun is gane down, an’ it’s the gloamin’ wi me now, if it is na a’ thegither mirk ;” and poor Mattie sighed heavily.

Miss Dunmore next interrogated her about her dislike to live with the housekeeper.

“ Housekeeper !” echoed Mattie, with some asperity ; “ ca’ ye that hizzie, Margery, house-keeper ? Troth, she was but a raw jillet whan I keepit the head o’ the house, amaist forty years aback. Think ye I wad snool to her for a morsel o’ bread ? She, wha can haud up her head aboon her betters, and cast it up to me that I am neglectit in my auld age, because I was nae better than a limmer in my youthfu’ anes ! I trow she kens na what it is to be wunchansie, or she wadna misca’ me sae. De’il ma care !” cried the old

woman, with a scornful toss of her head ; “ an’ I were deein’ for a brunt crust, I wadna say be-thankit to ae thing that came frae her hans ;” and with the strong glow of mortified feeling upon her wan cheek, Mattie remained for a few moments silent, chewing the cud of bitter thought. Respect for Rose at length overcame her indignation, and she struggled to regain her wonted serenity.

“ Ye may hae heard, my leddy,” said she, in a subdued tone, as if about to enter upon a painful topic in self-vindication,—“ ye may hae kent mony clishmaclavers about me ; the ane part may be true, but t’ither is as certainly fause ; and, as the auld folks are dead an’ gane, I winna keep my faute lockit up any langer, especial as my time canna be lang, and ane wadna be thought waur than we deserve. Muckle wae hae I dreed,” said the old woman, shaking her head impressively ; “ muckle o’ sin and sorrow, and it was na my faute either ; but gin the sin does na lie at my door, the sorrow is a’ my ain.”

Rose, whose whole soul was wrapped up in the interest inspired by this mournful preface, assured Mattie that her secret was in safe hands, and besought her to unburden her mind. From early habit, Miss Dunmore had grown accustomed to her dialect ; and Mattie, to whom her

old tongue was endeared by pleasant associations, loved to talk with Rose, because “she did not,” as she said, “fash her about speaking English fashion, which she did na like.” Cautiously securing the door, that no intruder might burst upon them unawares, Mattie took up her history from the days of her childhood.

“For a’ my Scotch phrase,” said she, “I was born and partly bred in this very barony; yet I could na be mair than some twa or three years’ auld whan ane simmer a sister o’ my mother’s, wha had married in Scotland, cam’ a’ the way frae the north countrie to see her kinswoman. Ye mind, I dinna recollect the fact; but I have heard the tale mony a time. My parents livit on this verra farm—sure enough cause hae I to rue the day I set my shoon on it!” (and the old woman cast a sorrowful glance around;) “but, as I was sayin’, here they livit, an’ well to do for puir warkin’ bodies; but I was the last o’ threteen childer, nine of wham were thrivin’ lads an’ lassies whan I cam’ into this sinfu’ world. My auntie Nannie had nae childer o’ her ain, an’ she fleeced my mither sair to gie her up the ‘wee bit bairn,’ as she ca’d me, to be a comfort to her in her auld age. And troth my mither did na want much entreat, for she was na ower couthie. Sae aff to bonnie Scotland I ganged, and bonnie

Scotland was my hame. My kinswoman, ye mind, was married to the Earl o' Dalkeith's bailiff, an' they livit on the lands o' Dalkeith abread the wa's o' the castle, and a braw castle it was. Ay! mony's the time I've daundered by the braeside on a clear moonlight e'en, wi' the stars twinklin' aboon me, an' the green grass o' the park under my feet, watchin' the high towers of the castle peepin' amang the tall trees, an' the yellow light frae the windows flickerin' upo' the branches, an' the bonnie deer lyin' under the trees, an' the air sae caller, and nae sound stirrin' but aiblins the fairy folk aneath the aik tree, dancin' to the canty sang o' the grasshopper. Ohon! thae were pleasant days," sighed the old woman, "for I was a blythe lassie, an' a gude ane. I kent nane o' the warld's deceit. I was nae wark-lume for ither folk's sinfu' devices. I could gang merrily about the house, an' lilt a tune wi' the best o' 'em. I was up wi' the laverock, an' down wi' the lamb, an' a' folks ca'd me a sonsie lassie. They could na say mair, ye ken, for the yerl's dochter was ca'd the bonnie flowre o' Enbrugh (an' Dalkeith is but the matter of four or five miles frae the great city). Alack! alack! she's gane lang syne, an' I'm left an auld wither'd stump without leaf or branch forbye that crabbit blastie, Andrew, puir fallow! I maun forgive him," said

Mattie, in a self-convicting tone, “ he’s a thorn i’ the flesh, sent to bring my sins to remembrance. I maunna withstand the rod that dunts me. It’s aye for the gude o’ the saul. Weel, as I was sayin’,” continued she, “ I dinna forget bonnie Scotland for a’ the weary years I’ve been awa’; nor do I forget the auld countess, or the young leddy. I ken na muckle o’ the yerl; he was a douse man, but snell withal, and married his lady of a strange fashion! Auld wives wad whiles crack about it, and the story ran thus.—The countess was a puir hizzie, like mysel, and serving-lass at the castle. Her name was Janet Gillespie; I mind it weel; for though she was cast doun by poortith, she was sprung frae the first gentles in the land. Ane fine day in summer the yerl walkit up the front court, which was wallit up into a braw square with a tower at each end. Sae he fands Janet picking up some feathers that had blawn aff the pea-fowl’s neck; and he cries out in a scornfu’ gait, ‘ Hoot awa’, ye fule bodie, what gars ye fyke yoursel about a strae? ye ken nae what ye’re daen.’ Now Janet was na fashed. She was a discreet fair-spoken lass, and she gies him ane word for anither. ‘ Sooth I’m nae fule, my lord,’ said she, drappin’ a curchie; ‘ I ken weel eneugh that ane and ane mak’ twa, and that mony feathers will fill a pock.’ Certes, my

lord was sae weel pleasit wi' her words, that he tookit a grand liking to her, and he raisit her up ane degree aboon anither till she got to be mistress ower all of every degree. They say a blink o' the sun blears weak een ; but it was na sae wi' her, for she bore hersel cannily and dousely. And, though the yerl was a rough-spoken carle, and she was na sae weel favoured, she rulit him wi' ane word of her mouth. The Lady Elizabeth, her dochter, she was a sprig of the same branch ; but far mair comely an' gracefu' than her mither, and often wad she gang up to the Carse Riggs, as Willie Mackinden's place was ca'd. Mony a cozy hour hae we spent thegither in merry cracks and daffing, for ye ken thae days were our best anes. We were ower sprittle, and did na fash ousrels with ae thing. The young leddy was about my ain age, and frae wee bairns we pluckit gowans, and rin after the gimmers, and wad be scaur at the big staggies in the park ; and she usit to gang doun wi' me to the loanin' whan I milkit the kye, and pu' the lint aff my staff whan I was rockin. O hey ! she was a canty bodie ; but I sall never see her mair ! " and poor Mattie sighed deeply and heavily. " The first grief I ever dreded," continued she, " was whan the dear young leddy sped awa' to the north wi' Sir Hugh Macdonald. Weel do I remember that sorrow.

Things go an' come now-a-days, and I dinna gie 'em a thought; but the things o' my youth—odds! I canna drive 'em out o' my mind. Weel, my young leddy's bridal was a blythe ane; ye see nougnt like it i' thae days," said Mattie, with a sovereign contempt for the diminished splendour of modern pageantry. "Muckle gear did she gie me, and wad hae taken me awa' wi' her; but I could na think to forsake my ain kindred, and they sairly doited wi' sickness and auld age. I staid, an' tentit them, an' keepit a' thegither, thack an' rape, till I saw them baith laid in the kirk-yard. Nou Sandie Mackinder, Willie's ain brither's child, cam' doun to take his place, according to the yerl's agreement, an' he flettered me out o' my rights; for ye ken I was full o' trouble, and did na care for the gear. The daft chiel was na for letting me aff, sayin' that I wad mak' a bonnie gude wife; but I did na like his fashion o' wooing, and something rin i' my brain that I maun end ~~my~~ days i' my ain land. (Aiblins it was thinking of auld Rob Allan, wha spaed my fortune.) The countess wad hae taken me into the castle, and I kent weel eneugh my bonnie young leddy would have been right pleasit to see me; but my mither grew auld an' ailin', a' my sisters were gane out to service, an' she prayit me to gang hame, an' leuk after the house.

Sae I wadna be thought undutif' , an' doun I cam' to this verra place ; an' as I was a stirrin', thrifthy lass, I soon set a' things straight, an' gainit the gude-will o' my mither, an' a' the neebors. But now cam' a' my tribulations," said the old woman, shaking her head ; " for him, they ca' the auld lord (he was na auld then, but young an' braw)—his name was Paul de la Fontayne ; he livit at the priory in thae days. He went, as was aye the custom of the house of la Fontayne, to fight for his king and country, and was kilt ten years after by the Scotch rebels. But he was alive then, an' a braw-looking man he was—there's nane such nou-a-days. My lord cam' ilka day to the mailen, and ilka time seemit to take mair notice of me ; troth, I was na despisable either, though ye may wonner to hear sic a puir cratur say sae, for my skin was as white as milk, an' my een as clear as the blue sky ; and though I am nou cowed doun wi' sickness and trouble, I was as tall and as straight as a poplar tree."

Miss Dunmore, at these words, cast her eye upon the old woman, in whose faded features and decrepit figure it required no ordinary stretch of the imagination to discern any trace of that beauty upon which poor Mattie even now dwelt with an unwonted degree of self-complacency.

“ Weel, as I was sayin’,” continued she, “ my lord aftern came. I did na like his cracks ower muckle, but I daurna say sae, for he was a dour earle, an’ didna like to be fashed. My mither chid me for being sae blate, and askit me if I wadna gae serving-lass to the priory ; and I answered that I wad as lieve gang to the deil as put mysel in the baron’s power, for ye ken he had a sair name amang the wenchès. Sae my mither put hersel in a carfuffle, an’ ca’d me a fule, and that I didna ken which side the bannock was buttered. And she at me again and again, sayin’, that my lord wadna take a denial, an’ that he maunna be gainsayed ; that it gar’t me sair waefu’, and in an evil hour I consented. Aweel ! aweel !” said Mattie, “ the word was nae sooner out of my mouth than my heart misgave me, an’ I grew unco sad ; sae that whan I sped doun to the priory, my lord, who was verra fletcherin’, met me at the court, and speer’t me, if I had seen a kelpie. Troth, I lookit mair like a ghaist mysel. Sair, sair did I greet ; and my lord was amaist persuadit to let me awa’. He askit me gin I had any joes ; an’ whan I said na, the blink o’ his ee wasna for gude. Things went on verra weel for some weeks, till ane fearfu’ night my lord shawed the cloven fute ; an’ it put me in sic a flicker, that I set aff hame in the dead o’ the night. It was mirk, an’ the door was stekkit at

the mailen. I knockit aloud, an' the noise waukit my mither out of a sound sleep, an' she cam' doun. Sair grievit was she for me at first; but whan my brither ganged doun to the priory at sunrise (he was a stirrin' chiel, the auld lord) he was won ower wi' gowd an' fair promises, an' sae was my mither, I trow, whan she kent o' the siller. But I wadna be sauld, an' I stickit till't a lang time, an' they ca'd me a dory fule, for my pains-taking. Ohon! it was the strong arm o' flesh which o'ercame me at last. I resistit the devil, but he wadna flee frae me. My lord threatened to take awa' the mailen, and mak' a roupin' o' a' the gear. My mither, ye ken, had been born an' bred on the spot, and a' my forbears frae generation to generation. She grew amaist deleerit at the sight of her misfortunes; an' every time I leukit at her, I felt a dirl through me, like the sinmer lightning. I couldna sleep o' nights, thinkin' o' my mither in sic distress, an' I grat my een out without mendin' the matter. Ane day, I says to her, as we sat by this verra ingleside,— ‘Mither dear, dinna ye mind what the blessed buke says? ‘I will be a father to the fatherless, and let your widows trust in me!’’ And she lookit at me wi' sair een. ‘The deil can quote Scripture,’ saith she; ‘but gin ye can fand ony part o' the Bible strong eneugh to hinder my lord frae takin’ awa’ the farm, or sauve me frae

poortith in my auld age, ye sall take your ain gate for me.' ”

“ And what did you say ? ” inquired Miss Dunmore, with eagerness.

“ In gude sooth,” continued Mattie, “ I didna ken what to say, for I was sair fashed. It was the sin o’ despair, ye mind ; the evil ane tookit possession of me, wi’ seven ither spirits mair wicked than himsel. Somebody thirled at the door-pin, an’ my heart jumpit to my thrapple. Waes me ! it was the yerl himsel, an’ as he passit me, he gies a sconner wi’ his een that set my wits in a creel ; sae whan he was gane, I warstled nae langer, but gaed up to the priory that very e’en. It was a wrang deed—it was a sinfu’ deed, I ken weel eneugh,” said the poor woman, with a heavy sigh. “ I was better informit o’ my duty, an’ I suld hae resisted unto death ; and sae I wad hae dune, but I couldna be the death of my ain mither, an’ the ruin o’ my kin. But, ohon ! ” continued poor Mattie, lifting up her hands in the bitterness of her anguish, “ muckle thanks gat I for giving the life o’ my saul for the cure o’ their sinfu’ bodies. Dinna greet for me,” said she to Rose, in a gentler tone ; “ it was wrang, but it wasna the unpardonable offence ; an’ I hae fand grace lang syne to repent o’ my share o’ the matter. But they ’ll be comin’ ben,” said she,

looking out anxiously into the yard. "I maun gang on wi' my tale. Sae I went to the priory as serving-lass; an' though I soon cam' to be housekeeper, a' the neebors ken, if they wad speak, that I didna haud my head aboon my betters, or dress brawlie, or talk idle clavers wi' aebody; an' though I was owercome, I wadna consent to live in sin."

"But why did you not leave the priory for good?" inquired Miss Dunmore. "Why not follow up your resolution?"

"Ye ken the reason," returned the poor woman, sorrowfully. "I wad scorn to speak ye fause; but what was I to do? My lord wad hae me bide o' ony terms; an' whare was I to gang? Troth, my mither wadna hae openit her doors to me; an' my gude name was gane. Whar suld I gang but to waur mischance? I didna eat the bread o' idleness; and if I was keepit, it was to toil an' trouble. Aweel," continued she, "my lord livit muckle to himsel, an' didna consort wi' ony o' the neeboring gentles. He was ower kind to me, an' a' folks ca'd me 'my leddy.' An' I wasna dure to aebody that came about; for it wasna my nature to refuse a mouthfu' to a puir bodie whan I livit in a land flowing wi' milk an' hinny. Aweel, my lord sped to the wars; but afore he gaed, he shaws me a deed in his ain han'-

writ, whereby I was to be benefit at his death. ‘ Mattie,’ says he, (thae were his ain words,) ‘ I hae doon ye muckle wrang, but I maun make restitution ; an’ there is what will keep you aboon head whan I am gane.’ I grat sair at these words ; for, oh ! I likit the yerl far mair than the siller, an’ I wad hae gied my heart’s bluid to hae sauved his life. I never set een on him mair ; but the deed—it was lockit up wi’ the lave o’ my lord’s effects ; and when the agent cam’ doon to settle affairs, he laid han’-grip on ‘t, an’ I never kent mair o’ it. Ye mind I had nae muckle siller, for I gaed it a’ to the baron whan he was in a sair stress ; so I was advisit to try an’ recover my rights ; but, ohon ! it was a fashious job. I couldna fand gowd or interest to redeem my nain, sae I was fain to gie it up a’ thegither. Aweel,’ continued Mattie, “ whan things are at the warst they aft mak’ a turn for the better, an’ sae it was nou. The fresh lord came to Norman Abbey, an’ I waited in the hall to gie them a welcome, as in duty bound. My lady steppit in first, an’ hech, sirs ! wha suld I set een upo’ but my ain winsome young leddy o’ Dalkeith Castle ! I was amaist deleerit for joy, an’ she was weel pleasit, I trow. Frae that time ilka thing gaed straught wi’ me. I tauld my hail story to my leddy, an’ she was sair grieveit at my misfortune, for we had been

like kimmers in our youth. Ane day I said to her, ‘ Dinna ye recollect, my leddy, whan auld Rob Allan spaed our weird, he tauld ye that ye suld hae two husbands, an’ that him as wad wrang me wadna die a fair strae death?’ I dinna jist nou mind my leddy’s ain words, but they were something about the sin o’ witchcraft ; an’ I aye regardit her phrase, because she was ower per-junk and speer’t to me gin I did na pin sae muckle faith on auld Rob’s tale, as to think it necessaire to dree my ain weird. I might hae speer’t her sican a question aiblins mysel ; but ye ken,’ said Mattie, with a shrewd look and emphatic nod, “ the gentles are ower wise i’ their ain conceits, an’ dinna like a puir bodie to gie ’em sma’ change for their gowden sayings.” Rose laughed at the sly sagacity of the old woman, and Mattie went on in a graver tone :—“ Sae I said naethin’ ; an’ the dear leddy, thinking I was doited at the past, (she had a noble saul !) said to me, ‘ Mattie, my gude Mattie, I didna mean to fash ye. I mind our blessit Saviour came to seek an’ to sauve that which was lost. Let him that is without sin cast the first stone. An’ sure the holy angels are na free to scoff at a lost ane, syne there is mair joy in heaven over ane sinner that repenteth than over ninety-and-nine just persons that need nae repentance.’ And in gude sooth,”

said Mattie, “ my leddy had as muckle right to ken what they wad be daen in heaven as ilka ane that was there, for she was an angel hersel ; an’ though she was ordainit to bide awhile in a fleshly tabernacle, it wasna for lang ; an’ my bonnie leddy is nou a’thegither as the angels o’ light. Ye ken maist o’ my story nou,” continued she. “ I lost my dear leddy ; but my loss was her gain. There was a sair lament at her death, for she was belovit by the hale country. High an’ low sped to her burial, an’ they mournit for her as for their ain kin. Her dochter by Sir Hugh Macdonald grew up, an’ shawed me muckle kindness for her mither’s sake. Sir Hubert, the brother o’ my lord, had a son, wha was brought up at Norman Abbey. He an’ Miss Grace takit a fancy ane till t’ither ; but there was ill blude cam’ atween ‘em, an’ he sped awa’ to foreign parts. Presently he comes again, whan twa or three years had passit, an’ my young leddy an’ he makit a moonlight flitting o’t. My leddy she gaed awa’, an’ she cam’ again wi’ a bonnie bairn in her arms, whan we aye fancit there was nae heir to the puir auld baron’s estates. Hech ! what a hue an’ cry was there amang my lord’s kins-folk ; but it could na be resistit.”

“ But did not the late baron leave you something at his death ?” inquired Rose.

“ Weel! he said sae,” retorted Mattie, carelessly; “ but I trow it wasna his to leave. Things were in a sair plight at his death, an’ ilka folk played at hog-shouther till naebody could ken their ain. Leddy Fontayne wad hae gien me the siller ance, but I didna want for naething at the time; an’ what for suld I be fash’d wi’ it? she was ower gude till me; but she kent nane o’ my youth as her mither did, an’ nae ill-natured claver reachit her ears till that busy bodie ye ca’ house-keeper gat the handlin’ of her. My ain leddy wadna hae suffer’t a light word, an’ Andrew, puir bairn! never kent he had a drap o’ gude blude in his veins. Waes me!” continued the old woman, “ it wasna for me to glory in my shame; but whiles I did think (God forgie me!) whan ilka ane that was twenty degree frae the auld baron wad warstle for the heritage, what a sair pity it was that my puir bairn couldna come till’t. Ye ken it was hard to miss ilka chance for lack o’ ban an’ bond, whan three words i’ bonnie Scotland, (sican words as aft passit atween the baron an’ mysel,) wad hae made me his lawfu’ wife, an’ my puir bairn a braw lord!”

Here the long narrative of Mattie ended, and Rose, whose interest in the old and faithful domestic of the Fontaynes had considerably increased during the recital, now took her leave,

with an assurance that she would not fail to represent her necessities to Lord Fontayne the very first time she had an opportunity of seeing him. Mattie, who had the strongest faith in the honour and generosity of the young lord, as she called him, saw Rose depart, with the full and comfortable impression that a few weeks would soon see her in the possession of a decent independence, and, what persons in her situation value as the greatest blessing under heaven—a home of her own.

CHAPTER XII.

When we cry out 'gainst fate, 'twere well
We should remember Fortune can take nought
Save what she gave—the rest was nakedness,
And lusts, and appetites, and vanities.

Two FOSCARI.

Besrew my heart! but it is wondering strange!
Sure there is something more than witchcraft in them,
That masters e'en the wisest of us all.

OLD PLAY.

SUMMER, autumn, and even winter passed away, yet Lord Fontayne came not. Miss Dunmore continued to transmit his bounty to the poor old woman as usual, till, in process of time, the correspondence between the parties gradually ceased. Rose, by the death of her mother, left Grassmoor Cottage, and sought a new home with a wealthy relative in the north of England.

She did not leave home, however, without

solemnly committing Mattie to the care of Lord Fontayne, with an urgent request that he would secure to the old woman such a provision as would place her beyond the power of accident. This epistle, owing to Lord Fontayne's absence from London at the time, never reached him. From the tenour of his hasty reply to the letter in which Rose communicated her own plans, she was erroneously led to conclude that Evelyn had attended to her request, and that poor Mattie's grievances were, now, permanently redressed. Alas! for Lord Fontayne, who was naturally infirm of purpose, this mistake only served to remove the subject still farther from his mind. He trusted, hoped, took it for granted, that Mattie's relations would see that she wanted for nothing, and looking forwards to a personal investigation, he (like many others) left to the fatal morrow the business which ought to have been promptly executed to-day.

Lord Fontayne's pleasure in the enjoyment of his sister's society was interrupted by her marriage with the young Earl of Rochford, who had lately succeeded to the family title and honours, together with the royal favour. Sir William Temple's resignation of public honours and retirement into the country, in consequence of the disgust he had taken at certain of the king's

measures, dissolved the only public connexion which could eventually benefit Evelyn. Sir William's retreat was calm, dignified, and magnanimous.

“Your lordship has just arrived in time,” said he, “to take advantage of my dying influence; a year later, and it had been impossible to have served you. I shall never more dabble in politics; but that does not hinder me from living a good subject. I cannot bear to see the rights of the people wantonly invaded; yet I durst not trust my own irascible temper in their defence, lest it should hurry me from one justifiable act of hostility into a determined state of warfare against my legitimate sovereign. But remember, my young friend,” said Sir William, kindly laying his hand upon Evelyn’s shoulder, “that I am, at all times, and under all circumstances, at your command, and ever most ready to welcome you to my country retreat.”

Thrown again upon his own resources, with a morbid irritability of temper, which made solitude alike painful and dangerous, Evelyn became gradually drawn into the still more fatal vortex of dissipation. The flattering notice of royalty, the smiles of the numerous meretricious beauties who formed a galaxy of dazzling splendour around the court, and the liberal encouragement which

his taste for wit and satire met with amongst the thoughtless and libertine of his own sex, had already produced their worst effects upon an inexperienced youth. Evelyn grew intoxicated by his unexpected success. To one who had hitherto led a retired and contemplative life, the admiration of a brilliant circle was a triumph as unlooked for, as seductive. He was astonished at the almost miraculous developement of powers hitherto unknown to himself; and his wit, called into exercise by the collision of kindred spirits, appeared in the light of a new creation.

The novel sensations produced by this flattering discovery, for a time, erased every other feeling. His eager flow of animal spirits, stimulated by constant fuel, made him scatter with the profusion of a spendthrift all those gifts which had formerly been hoarded with the rapacity of a miser. The state of public affairs gave him a distaste for politics; his naturally severe sense of justice, and personal connexion with the leaders of obnoxious measures, continually clashed with each other, and, at the close of a two years' residence about court, Lord Fontayne found himself wrecked in fortune, ruined in the estimation of the good, still lower degraded in the opinion of those whose cool sagacity had deliberately

marked his headlong career, and alternately pitied and blamed by his admiring sister.

In this critical state, Sir William Temple's pressing invitation into Surrey opened to Evelyn the only place of refuge from the toils which were every day gaining fresh strength, and from which he had not resolution voluntarily to withdraw himself. Never was the saving hand of friendship more needful or acceptable. Lord Fontayne could no longer withstand the generous importunity of Sir William, who could not be deterred from offering his services over and over again, however coolly repulsed, or ungraciously neglected.

The first letter which he wrote to his sister, on his arrival at the hospitable mansion of his friend, will best describe his situation.

Sheen, April, 1686.

You might have spared your reproaches, Isidora ; they come with a bad grace from a Catholic. Do not I know that you commit sins without number under the comforting assurance of a plenary indulgence from your spiritual counsellor ? Yet you deny to a poor heretic, like myself, an atom of that consolatory doctrine, which would be a savour of life unto me in my present distress. Had

I not argued more favourably of thy pacific feelings, trust me, thou shouldst never have had my shrift. Fair sample of thy —— sex ! I was going to write an ugly word, but my compassionate heart in pity towards your frailty, blots it out.

Wherefore, O inexorable censoria, dost thou turn over to the regions of utter darkness the being whom thy most gracious hands conducted on the highway to his satanic majesty's dominions ? Hadst thou not taken to thyself a bosom friend —a stray sheep lurking at the outside of the penfold, till thy gentle yearnings drew him into the pale of the mother church, I had yet remained under thy omnipotent sway.—To be serious, Isidora, your marriage, Temple's secession, and the dishonourable neglect of my right honourable kinsmen were so many nebulous stars to counteract the beneficial course of my ruling planet. You, however, who have so long mourned over my delinquencies, may take courage upon the date of this letter. Here am I, safe and sound, in the ark of peace and security. Having, when I first thought of this escape from utter shipwreck, sent out on the wide waters of anguish a croaking raven, which bird of ill omen returned to me with thy gentle upbraidings, I now commission my present dove-like messenger to return with the olive-branch of benignity in his cooing bill. I am tired of reproaches,

Isidora, especially from thee, who shouldst have a more fellow-feeling for my transgressions. How I long to pull down thy vaunted self-complacency ! What the deuce hinders me from inheriting, by virtue of a staunch presbyterian mother, more outward decorum than thou, whose warm Spanish blood mounts up to thy very eyes in floods of fire, or distils in languishing dews of tenderness ? Dame Nature may have originally intended us to act opposite parts in this mortal drama ; but, with her accustomed caprice, she altered the characters during representation. *My* chaste and refined tendencies were prostituted to satisfy the demands of a vitiated taste, whilst *your* exuberances of feeling were restrained by the stern castigations of that salic law, which excludes females from any right over the empire of licentiousness. You advise me to try matrimony,—I, who am so lately released from the fetters of the law. Thanks for the prescription, gentle lady ; but I have tried its efficacy upon several of my acquaintances, and, faith ! I deem the remedy worse than the disease it was sent to cure. I would rather have two or three good-for-nothing self-tormenting vices, than one hot-pressed darling virtue, elegantly gilt, and presenting a most imposing spectacle to the inexperienced eye ; things that deceive you into a false and mis-

placed confidence.—“ But what has this to do with matrimony ?” you will ask. A great deal, *ma belle sœur*. In the first place, it would neither be creditable nor safe to marry a woman of the same sentiments ; (I hate an Amazon;) and, in the second, I could not live under the same roof two hours together with a woman who was always thwarting me. It is not in my nature to bear contradiction ; and, of all slavery, conjugal bondage is, to me, the most unsupportable. A woman may “ twist me round her thumb,” you will say. In a state of freedom, I grant you, this may be the case. Miss Temple’s parrot bites my finger, and my plague of a monkey torments me to death with his intolerable freaks. All these annoyances I can bear manfully, because I provoke them, and love to see the poor domestic slaves grow wanton in the exercise of a freedom which I can limit at will ; but legalised tyranny ! I crave your pity—it is, indeed, beyond my powers of endurance. I defy you to blame my pertinacious resistance, Izzy, since I gave you the same reasons for continuing a life of celibacy, which you did for declining the well-meant honour.

I have written all this abominable scrawl without saying one word about this kind family, to whom I lie under everlasting obligations. Sir William’s character is known to you in some de-

gree; but how imperfectly! Noble and distinguished as was his public career, in private life he appears still more estimable, and a hundred hidden virtues have sprung up since his aching shoulders were relieved from the *Atlas* of state affairs. This is saying much for a man who always appeared to possess more real *bonhomie* than any of the human species that ever came under my observation. Rural employments and the *belles lettres* now engage the sole attention of the *ci-devant* statesman, and the whole series of his political adventures appears to have already vanished from his memory. As you have resided so short a time in the British dominions, it is not to be supposed that you know any thing of Sir William Temple's private history, nor is it necessary for me to enter into these details, as they will shortly appear in his memoirs, which are forthcoming. Suffice it to say, that the political course of my friend, (I write that word with a proud feeling, Isidora,) has been marked with such undeviating rectitude, such a steady adherence to the best interests of his country, together with such a warm-hearted attachment to his sovereign, as to render him the idol of his own party, and the admiration of all. In short, Isidora, Sir William Temple is a genuine philanthropist, and I am narrowing the sphere of his influence when I talk of parties. He is a citizen

of the world, and as such, the truest patriot. Like a wise politician, he understands too well the relative claims and mutual dependence of man, not to perceive that the prosperity of individual states contributes to the welfare of the whole, and that private right cannot be infringed without endangering the public good.

“ It is in the course of nature,” he says, “ for one kingdom to dethrone another; but to engraft upon our timorous apprehensions the jealous policy of erecting our national grandeur upon the ruins of another state,” he affirms to be the most hateful maxim of expediency which tyranny has invented.

Temple, both as a statesman and an Irishman, is well versed in the troubrous history of the sister kingdom. Ireland, he affirms, will, one day, prove a fatal spoil to England; the series of oppressions to which it has been subjected ever since its first conquest, accumulating a vast and appalling debt of misery, which will one day fall upon the heads of its exactors. I have sometimes thought, Isidora, when Sir William expatiates warmly and eloquently upon this favourite topic, what a wide field of speculation lies open to the enterprising or ambitious! How delightful it would be to release this fine country from its degrading vassalage! --to assist in knocking off the fetters which chain down its despairing energies! —to fan the

sparks of moral, intellectual, and civil grandeur, which yet glimmer amidst the ashes of departed glory ! to —— ; but whither am I wandering ? “ Tell it not in Gath ! publish it not in Askelon ! ” that the descendant of staunch royalists is bit by the mad tenets of democracy.

Hast thou had enough of politics, and Sir William’s fair fame ? If so, I will proceed to a brief description of Sir William’s fair ward, who, having no positive qualities about her, is best described by negatives.

In the first place, Lucy Temple is neither very beautiful, very learned, very witty, nor strikingly accomplished ; nevertheless, she is one of the most agreeable persons of the feminine sex I ever met with. There is a character of repose about her, delightful to an eye distracted by the tumult of oppressive thought. A charming Claude Lorraine tint about her person and manners, captivating to the last degree. She says but little ; yet it is evident, from the embarrassing cast of her intelligent features, that her ideas outstrip her powers of expression. This constitutional shyness would have been a sore defect in my eyes two or three years back ; but you must be aware, Isidora, that a court atmosphere is a sovereign remedy against *mauvaise honte*. In proportion as I advance towards this desirable consummation,

the less relish I feel for confidence in others, particularly in those of a different sex. Lucy Temple has too much taste and feeling to be prominent, and I like her all the better for it ; because I find, from experience, that she can talk well, and even eloquently well in moments of excitement. Her mind, unoccupied by the low pursuits of female vanity, takes a shade of moral sublimity from the objects which engage its attention. Lucy, the tender, the devoted relative, smoothing the declining years of her guardian, ministering to his wants, and exhibiting in the heyday of bloom and youth an example of unpretending virtue and duteous love, is a spectacle at once novel and delightful. I grow enthusiastic, you will say. Alas ! Isidora, wherefore should the world condemn the involuntary convictions which force themselves a path through our sluggish impulses, and extort a passive consent to the excellence of true merit ? How seldom do such moments occur ! Is not every rising virtue cramped in its progress, by the pressure of tyrant custom, or stifled in its very birth by the dread of ridicule ? Let me prate, then, for once on a subject the gay world understands not. It cannot sympathise in my emotions, and would scarcely excuse them.

To you, beloved friend, I may freely communicate them without fear of reproach. Virtue ap-

pears in such an amiable garb at Sheen, that I am fairly in love with the sage deity, whose crabbed looks I have hitherto forsworn.—Fare thee well till to-morrow !

CONTINUATION.

Ye see what a large letter I have written to you, in mine own hand. You are my only female correspondent, except Rose Dunmore, who hath shut herself up in some Gothic mansion in the north of England. Heigho ! the name of poor Rose recalls old times, Isidora. You know the history of my first unhappy love. It was only a short time before I left town that I met the dear tormenting object of my early vows. We had never met since her marriage, for I had made it a point to avoid every place of amusement where I was likely to meet her. Chance, however, threw me in contact with her husband, who, unconscious of a tenderer sentiment lurking in my bosom than what the laws of consanguinity warranted, rallied me unmercifully upon my neglect of my fair cousin. Whether it was the effect of his satire, or a secret inclination once more to behold Bertha in the hope of dispelling the illusion which still hung over my imagination, I cannot say. Certain it is, that in a proud fit of desperation I accepted Courtenay's invitation to join a numerous and

splendid assembly held at his house. Ah! Isidora, how much had I miscalculated upon the strength of offended pride! On entering the magnificent saloon, all my artificial courage deserted me, and my nerves, wound up to a pitch of much enduring hardihood, became, in one instant, unstrung:—the pompous announcement of my name, re-echoed by that never-to-be-forgotten voice! the inquisitive glance of the gorgeous assembly, (all of whom I foolishly imagined knew of my disappointment, and read it in my eyes!)—O! I can never forget the horror of that moment!

Bertha, instead of looking grave and matronly, as I expected, seemed to have grown still more attractive and lively. Her charms were more matured, and she had lost that attenuated look, which, in evening costume, is always a drawback from the perfect elegance of a slight figure.

Fortunately, we were not thrown together; yet our eyes often met; and mine, I fear, were sad tell-tales. I was dull and melancholy, cold and abstracted, rarely entering into conversation, and dealing out my brief answers to the commonplace questions addressed to me with a distant and measured civility. Bertha, on the contrary, presented the joyous aspect of a happy, unsuspecting wife; although her husband's attentions, occasionally directed towards herself, were more

generally bestowed upon a person, who, by her familiar and caressing manners towards Bertha, appeared to insinuate herself into the good graces of the latter.

I did not like this woman's countenance and deportment, Isidora. There was something marked and premeditated about her altogether. Her dress was plain, to the extreme of singularity ; her manners uniformly courteous and unobtrusive. She never looked direct at the person she addressed, and, when obliged to deliver an opinion, there was a sort of deferential manner, mingled with a retreating calmness of deportment, which forbade a nearer approach to her sentiments, and left you in doubt as to her genuine feelings. Her profession, in short, seemed to be that of a ready listener, rather than a free talker.

Blame me not for undue severity, *ma belle sœur*, if I set down these qualities for bad in a person of decidedly good rank, and of a privileged age. I hate, in the first place, to see people afraid of committing themselves by a harmless solecism, cunningly leaving every inch of folly ground to be trodden over by a set of goodnatured, thoughtless devils, whilst they amuse themselves by laughing at them in their sleeve !

The woman's courtesy too, Isidora, was not the offspring of benevolence, for there was a devilish

sneer in her countenance, which made me shudder. Then, as to her dress, there was the very refinement of coquetry in its arrangement ; it seemed at once to blind superficial observers by its apparent negligence, as well as to set forth to advantage the charms of a voluptuous person.

I did not join the female party till a late hour, and here another mortification awaited me. Bertha's first-born and darling child was struggling in the arms of this female Machiavel, (as I must call her,) at the moment of my entrance. I gave an involuntary start, as if the existence of such a being had never been suggested to my mind's eye. The lovely child unconsciously increased my discomfiture by tottering towards me. By a simultaneous impulse I held my arms out to receive it, imprinting upon its soft cheek a warm and fervent kiss. As I turned my eyes upward, I saw the light grey eyes of the aforesaid lady directing the observation of mine host to this truly dramatic scene. Stung to the quick, I hurried away as soon as possible, with a determination never to throw myself into a similar situation, and with a painful presentiment that Bertha's domestic happiness is on the wane. Confound all busy-bodies, female counsellors, and confidential spies !

Thine, with all dutiful reverence,
and brotherly affection,

FONTAYNE.

The active mind of Lord Fontayne was not destined to remain long unoccupied. A variety of projects were started and abandoned at the same time.

His friend Sir William Temple, with his usual penetration, traced up this vacillating state of feeling to the want of an aim sufficiently elevated to give scope to his powerful talents. The state of Europe did not at that time offer any opening to an enterprising mind; and Sir William, who was alive to the danger of an active spirit condemned to a life of idleness, was the first to propose a change of scene.

“A visit to those places which have been rendered famous by the pen of the historian or poet,” said he, “will be at once interesting and improving. I am too old and too busy to accompany you. But if it were not so,” added he, “my son is in France; and what should I do with Lucy in the mean time? Women are troublesome baggage to carry about with one; yet I fancy I can provide you with a comrade, well witted, and of a decent comportment withal.”

Evelyn’s travelling arrangements were soon completed. Sir William drew out a chart of his future plans, and the immediate prosecution of them was only delayed until Evelyn had paid a long-promised visit to his friend Stafford Montagu, the present occupant of his paternal mansion.

CHAPTER XIII.

Now purer air
Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
All sadness, but despair.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

My sole resources in the path I trod
Were these ——— my love—my God.
The last I left in youth—*He* leaves me now,
And man but works his will to lay me low.

BYRON.

ON the road to Norman Abbey all Evelyn's painful feelings revived.

“ I never wished to see the place any more,” thought he; “ but what can I do? To sell it would be to disturb the manes of my mother. I can only appease them by the sacrifice of this needful emolument.”

It was late when Evelyn reached the abbey; yet there was sufficient daylight for him to dis-

cern an air of neatness and embellishment, which argued considerable improvement in his estate.

“The land thrives under stranger hands,” said he, darting a glance through the deep-tangled wilderness of former times, now cleared of its superabundance of useless vegetation. “True,” continued he, with a natural burst of regret at the little personal interest he possessed over the decorations of his family residence; “it is too true that Norman Abbey is better set up, far better appointed in every respect, than it could have been under my restricted government. Well, they say the hen makes a better nursling to the callow duckling than its own amphibious parent.”

The visit of Lord Fontayne, as an invited guest to the seat of his forefathers, was a theme of fruitful gossip in the neighbouring hamlets. Some affirmed that the abbey was going to be fairly sold at last; others, again, concluded that “my lord had gotten a sight of monies at court, an’ was come to live at it himself.” These contrary opinions were entirely put to flight by the appearance of a young man at the door-stead of the farm-house where Mattie had taken up her abode.

Two or three hard raps of the young farmer’s sturdy knuckles brought to the door a middle-aged woman, whose meagre figure and sharp features announced as belonging to that description

of indefatigable housewives who wear out their frames by dint of perpetual restlessness, and eradicate every trace of original softness on their countenances by the fidgeting operation of an unquiet spirit.

“Eh! Master Truman, is it you?” cried the thrifty dame, saluting him with a corresponding stare of astonishment. “Who thought o’ seeing you at this time o’ night? My service to ye; but ye’re come on a bad errand, to come a neighbouring at this hour. There’s been o’er much flap-dragoning o’ late.”

“Where’s Luke?” inquired Truman, moving towards the general sitting apartment with the unconcerned aspect evinced by those persons to whom even the habit of a good scolding has become second nature. “I say, where is he?”

“Where is he, indeed! echoed the good lady in a shriller tone. “Why, in his first sleep, and snoring away, like a pig, as he is, plague on him!”

“Why, what’s the matter now?” said her visitor.

“Matter enough, on my conscience, Master Truman,” answered the mistress of the house, clapping herself down on a seat as she spoke, and industriously applying herself to the winding of a ravelled slipping. “Matter enough say I!

Here am I, toiling from morn till cock-shut eve,* ay, an' long after, slaving myself like a neger, all to make both ends meet ; an' there 's Luke, (such a noddy !) he 'd hardly swear his head 's his own, swashing an' noising like mad when he 's met any rascallions at the market. But let them as makes broken yeds mend 'em. I 'll not go near him, *that I won't* ;" and, with this magnanimous resolution, the incensed virago plumped herself down again upon the chair, from whence she had slowly risen in the heat of her debate.

" Why, what 's all this about ?" said the good-natured young farmer, with a look of concern. " I 'm sorry, if so be the master 's met with a mishap."

" Sorry are ye, forsooth ?" cried the angry dame. " That 's more than I am, lad. He should have taken better care : blood-letting may set him to rights. He 'll have none o' my nursing, I can promise him. Sorry, indeed !" and with a half-vengeful, half-relenting feeling, the good lady entered into a stout vindication of her unnatural resentment, which at length subsided into broken sentences, muttered in an air of heroical defiance, as every now and then her discourse was interrupted by the anxious queries of a stout serving-girl.

* Twilight.

“ What ails the wench ?” cried the mistress of the house, vexed at the display of a feeling in which she did not choose to sympathise. “ I never saw the like to ye all, man, woman, an’ child. I think in my heart ye’re bewitched, to run after a drunken man o’ this fashion. Get along your business, malapert, an’ if the master wants help, let one o’ the lads go up to him. Broken yed, indeed ! what business has he with a broken yed, an’ so many things to be done ? It would try the patience of Job, Master Truman. Here’s every thing at a stand-still out o’ doors, an’ sick folk in ; an’ every thing at sixes and sevens. O dear ! O dear ! it’s enough to craze a body. Sit ye down, man,” continued the vociferous orator, making a movement to the foot of the stairs ; “ I must e’en gi’ a look at him, to see they don’t cram him wi’ more liquor ; though he’s not worth a blink—a drunken dog !” And with this genteel apology for breach of promise, she mounted the steep staircase with a dogged air of assumed indifference, ill-contrasted with the fretful expression of her countenance, and the peevish tones of her querulous voice, as they descended through the open crevices in the flooring of the upper apartment into that where the young farmer was seated. The loud, uneasy, feverish slumbers of the sick man were dissipated by her presence, and his faint ex-

postulations with his angry rib were soon drowned in her noisy clamour. The virtue of passive endurance was, fortunately, a striking ingredient in her husband's character ; and, to the young farmer's great satisfaction, succeeded at length in producing a calm. The good dame, having exhausted her whole stock of abuse, began to make amends for past neglect, by redoubled assiduity and a most perverse inclination to find fault with those who had gone before her in the laudable task of administering remedies to the patient. In less than three quarters of an hour all things were fairly set to rights, and Luke's bleeding head, plastered and bandaged, restored to his pillow, when his wife left him to report the case below.

“ But, mistress,” interrupted the young man, “ I've a message from the priory for your folk.”

“ Gracious me !” cried the impatient talker, suddenly alarmed out of her intended history, “ what's the matter ? It's not a discharge, surely ? How can folks be so unreasonable, an' sich a bad har'st ?”

“ Pooh ! pooh ! mistress,” cried Truman, “ don't put yourself into sich a flustration ; my business lies between the young lord an' Mattie ; he wants her, like, to go down to th' priory to-morrow morning early. My lord axed me if I thought as how she was well done to.”

"And what did you say?" inquired mine hostess anxiously.

"Why," replied Truman, giving his head a slight scratch, "I said as how she went on pretty middling, as times go."

"That was neighbourly spoken, Master Truman," answered the dame, relaxing into good-humour at the frank, conciliatory manners of her guest. "I'm sure we do as well for her as we can afford; but you see we've plenty o' children to maintain, an' the poor soul gets a sore burden; an' that lazy, lubberly mooncalf Andrew's good for note but a scarecrow."

"Why, that's what I say," replied Truman, raising a foaming tankard to his lips.—("Here's to ye, mistress, an' better luck to the master!)—Says I, they've lived aw their lives at th' abbey, an' they ought to live there still. Who's so big a right to take care on 'em as the Fontaynes?"

"To be sure! to be sure!" ejaculated the farmer's wife; "it's more to their disgrace than mine if she comes to want: they might help to maintain her at any rate."

"Well," replied Truman, "you must tell her to come up to the priory to-morrow; you see my lord's making his will, like. (He's none so much to leave, I guess.) Howsomever, she's to come

in for her share if my lord gets kilt by the savages abroad."

"Abroad! is he going abroad?" cried mine hostess; "then he's not coming to the priory after all?"

"Why, no, mistress," cried the roguish rustic, "he's a clever chap, folks say; but it's past his art to be in two places at the same time. An' ye see I know all about it, 'cause my lord sends up for me, an' Blackburn, an' Ralph, an' a set on us to sign his will—howsome'er, to set our marks to't."

"Hem!" returned the captious dame, nodding her head significantly, "he might a' sent for my mester, I think; we've lived under the Fontaynes many a long year. Well, an' how does he look, now he's been among the grandees?"

"Why, you see," said Truman, lolling against the old-fashioned chimney-piece, and drawling out his sentences with more than ordinary precision, "my lord's one of the quality, like, him-sen, an' if he had but a smack o' colour in his cheeks, he wouldn't be sich a bad-looking fellow either: but dang me, if ever I set eyes on sich a white-faced dismal-looking chap in aw my born days!"

"Why, you don't say so?" cried his loquacious

hearer, who listened with gaping interest to a circumstance which seemed to concern the honour of the Fontayne tenantry ; “ an’ sich a nice fresh-looking young gentleman as he was a bit since ! But tell us how you went on, lad, it ’s so long since one heard on ’em. They ’re queer folks, them Fontaynes, for all the world like a well, one can ne’er see to th’ bottom on ’em.”

“ Ay—they ’re queer devils,” replied Truman, “ an’ I was quite scar’d at th’ first go off. We put Ralph foremost, ’cause he ’s been used to th’ quality.”

“ Why, now you don’t pretend to be afeard, Master Truman ?” cried the mistress of the house, in a tone of blunt raillery ; “ every body knows you ’re as bold as brass, an’ care for neither man, woman, nor child.”

“ But look ye, mistress,” said the young farmer, interrupting her, “ there ’s a vast o’ difference atween talking with a neighbour or so, an’ keepin’ company wi’ great folks. It seems easy, like, when one talks about it. The young lord ’s free spoken enuff, to be sure, an’ we usen ’d to play together when we were children ; but he ’s gotten sich comical ways, like.”

“ How ?” returned the eager listener.

“ Why, you see, the room was pitch dark, an’ cannles burnin’ at noon-day. I couldn’t well see

my way, an' I stared about like a stuck pig, till my lord gave sich a laugh as quoite shamed me, like. My lord's gotten the right use on his tongue at last, for he grew as merry as a grig ; howsomer, he didn't keep up to that fashion, but summut seemed to cross his mind, an' when I looked at him again he was sunken down into the great chair, an' looked as pale an' sad as a dumpling !”

“ Bless us, an' save us !” echoed the dame, “ what can he have to fret about ?—a great lord, too, with neither wife nor children to vex him !”

“ That 's the very thing as makes him go on so, I 'll be bound,” said Truman. “ You see, mistress, he didn't get the lass he loved, an' he 's like my brown filly as lost her dam, he niver joyed at t'after.”

“ Ay, that 's like enough to be the case,” returned the farmer's wife ; “ but more fool he, say I ! If one woman won't, another will :—but what 's to be done about Mattie ?” continued she, in an irresolute tone. “ The poor old cretur 's got the rheumatics, an' it 's out of all reason to think she can be moved at this time : besides,” continued the incredulous dame, “ it 's my opinion all this to-do about Mattie will turn out to be little or nothing. They 've made ower many fine promises ; but I 've always found it ‘ great cry an'

little wool' in that quarter," added she, in a lower key.

" Why, you see, missis," replied Truman, with a knowing look, " my lord *may* do something for her, and he may *not*. Those are two pints of an argufication, as Master Wisebrain says—every thing in this here world hangs on them two pints. Adam might have kept in the garden of Eden, an' all his generation after him, if Eve, instead of eating the forbidden fruit, had let it alone: but, as the schoolmaster says, ' she saw, she longed, and she did eat !' an' then he quotes summut about Julius Cesar."

" How sharp thou 'rt getten, Truman !" cried the dame, her dark vixen orbs sparkling with admiration. " It 's a fine thing to have larning, as the old song goes,

When land is gone and money spente,
Then learning is most excellente."

" But about Mattie ?" inquired the young farmer, as he lounged idly against the fire-place, a little abashed at this unexpected compliment. " What must I say to my lord about her ?"

" Say to him ?" replied the dame ; " why, tell him the truth, to be sure ; she keeps her bed, an' can't come. If he chooses to gi' her aught,

why, he 's free to send it ; I'se warrant we 'll lay it out for her better than she can do herself."

Truman set off, with the full intention of delivering this message in person the following morning. As he approached the priory, however, his fears got the better of his humanity.

" Dang it !" cried he, muttering aloud as he drew near the court, " but I don't like to go through the hall by my sen. I caren't for my lord hafe so much as these brazen chaps rampaging about, in at *one* door an' out on another, till they 're clean set fast for a job. I 'd like 'em to thresh a quartern o' woats* a day ; they 'd hae some cracks in their lily whoite hands I reckon."

The bashful young farmer looked, and hesitated, and looked again. The last look determined him ; for two or three of those useless members of society, to whom he had alluded, were upon the watch out for an adventure, and Truman's suspicions gaining fast ground upon him at the sight, he continued his walk in a different direction, resolving to lay the case before the *ci-devant* steward and his *cara sposa*.

Ralph promised to deliver the message, and receive Lord Fontayne's bounty ; but Ralph was latterly afflicted with a bad memory, and his wife

* Oats.

did not think proper to rub it up in the present instance. He went to bed with a bad headache, and awoke, after a night of sound rest, without either headache, or, what was worse, any recollection of the preceding day's converse with Will Truman.

No future business called him to the abbey during Lord Fontayne's stay ; and the commission never recurred to his mind till he saw Truman at a large fair held in the nearest market-town. The kind-hearted old man fretted at his neglect ; but his wife only consoled him by calling him an “unnatural fool, to be thinkin' of other folks before his lawful wife !”

“ Did my lord send for me ?” inquired she, angrily. “ I trow not. He has no fancy for honest folk. Let him go his way ; his room's as good as his company.”

Meantime, Lord Fontayne waited several days the result of Truman's embassy, before he despatched another messenger to the farm. The answer returned was, “ Mattie was too ill to stir out for any body.” A few verbal elisions, *comme à l'ordinaire*, had crept into the formation of this reply ; and the curtailed edition stated briefly and bluntly, “ that Mattie wouldn't come for nobody !”

“ O ! if the old woman is in a pet because I

didn't go up myself," said Lord Fontayne, vexed at her disrespectful message and ungracious reception of his intended kindness, "she may sulk her ill-humour out at leisure. I meant to have done something handsome for her, but she shall come to her senses first. Old servants may be indulged till they become tyrants."

Vexed as he was at the supposed neglect, Lord Fontayne had the justice and feeling to send a handsome present for the use of the old woman.

This money came very opportunely to the hands of the farmer and his wife, who, under a promise of kind treatment and a comfortable maintenance for life, easily prevailed upon their aged relative to give up the whole of her little personal property in aid of their necessities. Time passed. The old woman was at first an object of marked attention ; but, as her infirmities increased, these attentions gradually relaxed, and she felt herself a burden even to the objects of her beneficence. The little property, which might have given her consequence in the eyes of her neighbours, and protected her from actual want, was wasting before her sight through improvident speculations ; whilst the least hint to this effect was retorted in sharp upbraiding. Under these untoward circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that poor Mattie should insensibly fall into a state of po-

verty and distress, inconceivable to those who have never been witness to similar cases—a state aggravated by the recollection of her former prosperous, but dubious condition, and the consciousness of having survived all those whose enlightened sympathy might have softened the severity of her awakened convictions. Her poverty—her desolation—her self-reproachful feelings, wrung from that bitterness of spirit which makes the tongue of the sufferer its own worst enemy—all served to give edge and keenness to the coarse attacks of vulgar satire.

Corrosive grief preyed upon her very vitals, communicating its insidious poison to her emaciated frame, already enfeebled and palsied by age. Another and another generation had sprung up around her ancient dwelling; and the present inmates, either from natural insensibility or ignorance of her early claims upon her family, at length consigned her to the care of the parish.

Most of the neighbours, particularly the old inhabitants, cried shame upon such a proceeding; for the laws comprised in the statute of Queen Elizabeth, restricting casual and uncertain charity to a fixed legal provision, were not yet familiarised to a class of persons who are, in every age, extremely jealous witnesses of new innovations.

These tenacious advocates for the good old days

of lawless indigence, one by one, dropped into the silent grave, till there remained none to administer either temporal or spiritual relief to the poor outcast. To increase her sorrows, and, as it were, to add a fresh sting to remorse, the wretched, half-witted creature, who had been the fruit of her unlawful connexion, was seized with a frenzy amounting to the nature of demoniacal possession, and seemed to have taken a malicious pleasure in aggravating her misfortunes by his stubborn undutifulness.

“ Andrew’s gat the blink o’ an evil ee,” she would say. “ Ohon ! it’s a sair thing to dree sic a weird as mine ; but, oh—hee ! it’s far waur fra ane’s ain bairn !”

In this manner did the poor old woman drag on a miserable and comfortless existence, lying, as it were, under ban, in the terrors of a judicial curse, brought upon her by a generous self-abandonment to the interests of her unfeeling relatives ; and thus did Lord Fontayne’s criminal thoughtlessness make him accessory to a species of injustice, from the contemplation of which his generous heart would have revolted. Like too many well-meaning, but careless individuals, who ease their benevolence by setting their bounty afloat, without caring or searching to know if it pass into the right channel, he trusted to others without proving

their fidelity ; and, for want of personal inspection into his own affairs, or from failure of judgment in the choice of suitable agents, he got robbed on every side ; whilst *she*, who had stood by the interests of his family to the last, sat on her desolate hearth in a state of abject depression, writing bitter things against herself !

Ah ! how little do those who are “clothed in purple and fine linen,” and who “fare sumptuously every day,” dream about these passive violations of their duty ! They give, perchance, with a free heart and an outstretched arm, when the objects of their benevolence are before them, to stimulate their feelings by the obtrusion of their sorrows, or to ruffle their native indolence by the importunity of their demands. But, ah ! how few possess that enlightened charity which will pierce the hidden recesses of misery, in order to carry comfort to the mourning sufferer, pining in uncomplaining, comfortless obscurity !

All are not endowed with an equal proportion of constitutional hardihood, so as to penetrate the dark haunts of vice, from that exalted spirit of philanthropy which seeks to relieve the unhappy victim of crime from a course of hardened depravity. But what shall we say in defence of those amiable, but careless individuals, who will not take the trouble to sift and weigh a doubtful

cause? who are afraid to brave the frown of the wise, or the scoff of the ignorant, in their generous zeal to raise up from the mire of tribulation a fellow-sinner? whose original tendencies were pure and virtuous, but for whom the stern voice of custom or popular reproach issues the arbitrary sentence of outlawry?

* * * * *

From this time, nothing was heard or seen of Evelyn for several years. The last descendant of the ancient family of the Fontaynes was a sojourner in distant countries, and a stranger in the land of his fathers.

Rumour, at different intervals of time, wafted strange tales into the country. He was said to have travelled from one end of the globe to the other, and to have seen the seven wonders of the world. It was furthermore reported that he outrivaled Solomon in wisdom, as well as in the extent and beauty of his female favourites. Some affirmed that he was converted to Judaism, others to Mahomedanism, whilst the generality doubted if he would return with any religion at all.

The circumstance of his return, indeed, seemed very indecisive, although the expiration of the

lease, on the tenure of which the Fontayne estates were held, had left the old priory untenantable. Three or four years' absence, it was concluded, had given him such a taste for a roving life, as would, in all probability, prevent him from settling any where. Evelyn, who had kept up a regular correspondence with his sister, thus expressed his feelings at the close of his wanderings :—

“ I return to England, Isidora, with very different views to those which I brought away from thence, yet with a heart unchanged by time or accident. I have encountered every variety of scene and object, trod over the field of Mars, reposed in the bowers of the peaceful muse, and measured every inch of classic ground ; yet have I gained nothing by my researches but a painful confirmation to the truths whispered by my early experience. Still, Isidora, I bring home with me a less mournful impression of human nature, with a desire, a yearning of a more hopeful and inspiring character in the pursuit of knowledge. My enthusiasm remains unchanged in *degree* ; but I flatter myself you will find its *quality* improved. It is full as impassioned as heretofore ; but it has lost much of its feverish intensity. Vanity is doubtless inscribed upon all below ; still I have a

presentiment that I shall, one day, discover those hidden lights of truth and science, which, like the glimmering lamps of some consecrated shrines, burn with an immortality of lustre worthy the great luminary from whence they were kindled. In spite of all this egotism, Isidora, think not that I arrogate to myself the merit of bringing back treasures of pure and uncontaminated wisdom. Few of my contemporaries will lay the sin of presumption to my charge. They rather view me as a headlong madman; for, as it is always my humour to "answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit," so it hath generally happened these purblind sages have been somewhat out of their calculations when they have attempted to take the gauge of my understanding in the unguarded moments of conviviality. I need not ask if you have burnt my letters, Isidora, since I know your foolish fancy on that head. Every scrap, every atom of my miserable scrawls, is, I well know, as valuable in your eye, as the title deeds of an estate. They will be useful in one respect, as containing a more regular journal of my proceedings, than any book of travels I could compile out of the odds and ends of a perverse memory. It hath got such an infernal trick of remembering nothing but what

should be “like the dull weeds, rotting on Lethe’s wharf.” Once more adieu!

“ Your devoted brother,

“ E. F.

“ P. S. It is ages since I heard from Sir William Temple. Is Lucy married at last ?”

“ Come home, perverse one,” cried Lady Rochford, as she folded up the letter, “ and see for yourself. Married !” continued she, speaking aloud, “ to be sure she must be married long since, for she had a host of admirers the last time I heard about her ; and she is a sweet girl, too, this Lucy Temple, so quiet and good, but quite out of Evelyn’s way. One would not call her a bit clever¹ ; but, by the by, she may suit him for all that. None of his mighty favourites, such as Mrs. Courtenay and myself, have any pretensions to the character of a *belle esprit* : and, for Sir William to take such an interest in Evelyn, and Lucy to be so long in getting off !—well, well ! it *does* look rather suspicious.”

The number and variety of ideas suggested by this simple postscript proved that Lady Rochford attached all the importance which is usually ascribed to this species of tell-tale memoranda.

CHAPTER XIV.

If it be hopeless love, use generous means,
* * * * *

Take in a new infection to the heart,
And the rank poison of the old will die.

OLD PLAY.

Love is a passion
Which kindles honour into noble acts.

DRYDEN.

EVELYN's travels, however beneficial to his character, had not increased his pecuniary resources. His inclinations led him to the haunts of his youth; but he was drawn aside from the prosecution of his wishes by the reduced state of his finances.

“I cannot live like a hermit at Norman Abbey,” said he; “society is absolutely necessary to my well-being.”

His sister urged him to make the trial. “Every landholder,” she observed, “ought to live on his

own property. Your income, small as it is, may, by economical management, supply every actual want, and artificial ones are best unsupplied. If I have led you into a contrary opinion by advising you to turn courtier, let me, dearest Evelyn, retrieve my fault—a fault originating in inexperience; but, till you can make up your mind about the matter, come to us, and let Rochford and myself do our best towards reconciling you to the more sober pleasures of domestic life."

Evelyn, who was most tenderly attached to his sister, perhaps more so than if they had been brought up in the same home together from childhood, lent a willing ear to her entreaties, and consented to take up his abode for the present at Offham Park.

Isidora had been particularly happy in her first and only love. The man of her choice proved one of the best and most amiable of men. His talents, if not brilliant, were of no contemptible order, and were decidedly such as contributed to the welfare and happiness of those around him.

"I have known," said Evelyn, "two thoroughly good men in this wicked world, and such a discovery almost atones for the mass of abomination through which one must wade to find them."

The Earl of Rochford, from the retired cast of his character, had withdrawn himself into a nar-

rower sphere than Sir William Temple. The political life, early adventures, and profound knowledge of the latter, whilst it enlarged his mental resources, carried him beyond the immediate objects which surrounded him, and, in the ardour of his literary pursuits, his comprehensive mind would sometimes lose sight of these legitimate claims upon his attention. The earl, on the contrary, concentrated all the powers of a moderate understanding upon one particular object, and that object was the prosperity and happiness of a thriving, grateful tenantry.

The milk of human kindness, which flowed to abundance in the heart of Sir William, was sometimes turned into harsh crudities by the acidulous mixture of keen resentment; but the earl, with feelings as strong, had a less painful sense of injuries. His charities were more bland and insinuating; and if there was less of magnanimity, there was more of grace and delicacy in his general intercourse with persons of differing views, than appeared in the unguarded manners of the ex-courtier. Both were generous, unsuspecting, frank, and confiding. Smarting under the infliction of fraud, yet, after a time, willing to trust and be again deceived, yet was there this difference in their characters, that whereas the earl gave freely and indiscriminately from the

impulse of overflowing good-will, Sir William, from the frequent attacks of ingratitude, had become more cautious in the distribution of his regards. In short, there was exactly that kind of distinction between the two, which may be supposed to arise out of the disparity of their respective ages, and the different quality of their understandings.

The society which Evelyn met with at Offham Park was select, without being exclusive, and well chosen without being confined to any particular order of persons. As education and good-breeding were the principal qualifications for admission, he had an opportunity of meeting with a class of individuals hitherto unknown to him. The habit of associating with different degrees and orders in his own country was a new thing to Lord Fontayne, who, amongst other prejudices, attached an inordinate value to the accidental advantages of birth. His time, before he went abroad, had been spent amongst the worst sample of his own rank, the most dissolute of his own sex, the least reputable of the other ; and, though his residence in foreign countries had given him an intimate knowledge of the human species, seen under every possible variety and modification, he remained unacquainted with the best and most enlightened of his countrymen and countrywo-

men. Nevertheless, a free intercourse with persons of various nations and languages had brought his mind into a capacity for receiving the most liberal impressions. A habit of observation generally induces a habit of reflection; and the necessity of satisfying the vague doubts which float upon the hazy surface of the mind's eye obliges people to make use of the experience of others as well as their own. Evelyn could not tread upon consecrated ground without learning the cabala of the initiated, nor enter the arcana of science without the golden key of knowledge. He was, thus, naturally led to the study of books, together with that of mankind, and his confused ideas became insensibly arranged under the mechanical forms which, from want of proper associations, had bewildered instead of enlightening his youthful mind. He was often heard to say that nothing delighted him so much as to find the dark mystery of his own gloomy and tangled thoughts gradually unravelling as he advanced.

His fine talents, heightened and improved by cultivation, his enlarged acquaintance with the literature of many nations, together with a commanding person, marked with the most pleasing characteristics of nobility and intellect, made his society courted by all, and particularly by those individuals competent to estimate his various acquirements.

The countess partook of the general enthusiasm in his favour, with all the exaggerated feelings of her country.

“ I must erect a temple to Minerva if you stay any longer,” cried she one day ; “ and yet, my charming brother, proud as I am of your fame, I had rather convert it into the Temple of Hymen.”

“ I have no objection, *ma belle sœur*,” replied Evelyn, gaily, “ provided you will engage Love for the architect; but I tell you once for all, Isidora, I will have nothing to do with that bungling artisan, Plutus.”

“ Ah! but my dear romantic, disinterested brother,” cried the countess, in a caressing tone, “ what say you to a project which may unite the services of both, each useful in their way and generation? Cupid shall lay the foundation-stone, and Plutus shall rear the structure with ingots of gold.”

“ Admirable invention, my sentimental sister!” cried Evelyn, lifting up his hands in mimic ecstasy ; “ but what nymph of Helicon, think you, will condescend to inhabit such a piece of solid masonry?”

“ O! I know,” replied the countess, “ the poor water-drinking, barefooted damsels, who exist on ‘airy nothings,’ would perhaps turn up their noses at any thing but an immaterial shrine. But

a truce to Calliope and her eight learned sisters, who are too high-flown divinities by half for me : what say you to ——”

“ To *whom* ?” asked Evelyn, with some curiosity. “ I am really at a loss to find out the fair piece of mortality who is to keep me company in your temple.”

“ And yet you have named her, Evelyn, more than once ;—nay, don’t look grave at the idea,” continued the countess, “ Lucy Temple is richly deserving the affections of any man, independent of her fortune, which, on the mother’s side, is considerable.”

“ But how do I know,” cried Evelyn, thoughtfully, “ that Sir William Temple’s niece is favourably inclined towards me ? Report cannot have been much to my advantage, and it is long since we met.”

“ Of course, you cannot know by inspiration,” cried the countess, archly. “ Women—such women, I mean, as Lucy Temple, are not likely to make the first advances ; but, somehow or other, I fancy she would not be unrelenting towards yours.”

“ What makes you think so, Isidora ?” returned Evelyn, as certain recollections rushed upon his mind.

“ O ! I don’t know exactly ; but I *have* taken

such a fancy into my head, and, for a woman, that is enough."

"O! but your fancy must have some latent reasons to ground itself upon—it can't live upon air."

"And pray," resumed his sister, "what have poor Lucy's thoughts fed upon during your long absence? I hear she has refused, I know not how many offers; and though she has been admired for more things than her money; yet she professes her determination to remain single, that is, I shrewdly suspect, unless you have the charity or good sense to shake her resolution."

The countess said nothing more, and Evelyn passed the subject off as a joke. It was evident, however, that his sister's communication had revived a latent impression in favour of Miss Temple.

"I feel," said he, to himself, "that a happy home, an attractive companion, and fireside comforts, would be the thing for me, and Lucy is just the sort of woman to hold a husband captive at will, in the 'silken bonds of Love,' as the poet feigns."

Evelyn had not heard from Sir William for a considerable time. He began to grow fidgety and uneasy at receiving no answers to several

letters he had written since his return to England. He wished to see his old friend, but felt unwilling to hint the probability of making a personal inquiry, as the sanguine temper of the countess often led her into rash calculations.

Lord Fontayne had been domesticated at Offham Park some months, when, one morning, a letter was handed to him. Supposing it to be from Sir William Temple, he unclosed it eagerly. Glancing his eye rapidly over the contents, which proved to be written in a female hand, he turned deadly pale, and rushed out of the apartment to seek his sister.

“ Santa Maria !” cried the countess, in alarm, “ what can have occurred to agitate you thus ?”

“ Read it,” said Evelyn, thrusting the letter with trembling hands into hers. “ She is in distress —in misery, and I will go this instant to her.”

His sister read the letter over twice before she returned it to him. “ Do you know the writer ?” said she.

“ Not I,” returned Evelyn, throwing himself upon a couch, and covering his face to hide the starting tears. “ Some friend of Bertha’s, I suppose. What care I *who* wrote it. She has named me in the wanderings of her delirium, and I told her to use me as a friend when we parted. The very

words I made use of seem to have escaped her lips."

"And have been made use of to no good purpose, my dear brother," said Isidora, placing herself by his side. "Mrs. Courtenay is separated from her husband. I know not the merits of the case; there might be blame on both sides, and there are never wanting persons at hand ready enough to strengthen these unhappy differences, and to widen an opening breach."

"What signifies it to me?" cried Evelyn, impatiently; "the fact stands thus—Bertha is in trouble, and she is also allied to me by blood. Who shall prevent me from offering her my sympathy and consolation?"

"She is *my* relation, as well as yours, Evelyn," returned his sister, calmly, "and therefore has a natural claim upon us both; but, I confess, she is more to you, my dear brother, because she is the object of your fondest, earliest affections;—but, alas! this very circumstance renders your attentions infinitely dangerous. You wish to become this dear creature's comforter, but what consolation could you offer which would not finally aggravate her misfortunes? Would you have her lament the perversity of her choice, and pour into your listening ear the glowing detail of her conjugal infelicities?"

“ And in what ear, or in what bosom could she so safely repose her sorrows as in mine? I, who would give all I have in the world to make her happy !” And Lord Fontayne’s voice faltered with suppressed emotion.

“ O ! in none—none !” cried Isidora, pressing his cold, clammy hand between hers. “ In *none* could she place confidence who has a better heart to serve her ; but, ah ! my loved brother, ask that truant heart, if it can, after all it has felt and suffered, take upon itself the sober duties of a ministering friend. Can you—ought you to trust yourself as the guardian of a deserted wife ? Have you no wounds which may open afresh in the very act of closing those of another ? What balsam will you pour into a heart smarting under the pangs of disappointment, which will not secretly and insidiously infuse a deadly poison ? Be advised, and go not near her.”

“ What ! would you have me treat with neglect and scorn the woman who has courted my protection ? No ! if she were even indifferent to me, Isidora, I could not be such a traitor to the laws of good faith and courtesy,” cried Evelyn, shaking off his feelings with a proud air of desperation.

“ And yet, neglect will be the greatest kindness you can bestow in Mrs. Courtenay’s situation, brother.”

“ This from *you*, Isidora ?” said Evelyn, angrily. “ Confound matrimony, if it has turned *you* into a cold calculator !”

“ My dear Evelyn,” replied the countess, in a calm and persuasive tone, “ you must remember that my sympathy in this case is of a different nature from yours. I see with the eye of reason —you, with that of passion ; consequently, I am a better judge of your true interest than yourself : besides, my *gaieté du cœur* is only on the surface. Listen to me ; you must not go to Bertha. In her present oblivion of thought and reason, who knows what may happen ? and can you bear to put her pure fame in such jeopardy ? Prove that you respect her widowed desolation too much to obtrude your own selfish commiseration. Ah ! believe me,” cried the countess, with impassioned energy, “ you will be rewarded for the virtuous sacrifice of feelings—”

“ Disinterested ! *purely* disinterested, toward *her* !” cried Lord Fontayne, eagerly ; “ on my soul, Isidora, it is true ! I should hate myself if I could harbour a thought prejudicial to her best interests.”

“ I believe you, Evelyn, sincerely—fervently ; but the best impulses are not proof against powerful temptations, and the purest of human feelings have some earthly alloy. It is the voice of fren-

zied passion, and not of duty, which calls you to the post of danger—heed it not."

"Oh! Isidora," cried Evelyn, with satirical keenness, "you are grown too acute a logician for me. Little did I think the time would come when you would fight me with the weapons of scholastic casuistry! Why were you not elected arch-priestess of the sect?"

"Evelyn," returned the countess, with starting tears, "my love is warmer than your resentment, or I would leave you to the consequences of your meditated imprudence. I make no pretensions to superior wisdom; and, if I am for once eloquent in contradiction, you should be the last to upbraid me, since it is affection which arms my feeble powers for your good."

"Ah! I see *you* will give me up at last, Isidora, like all the rest, just because I cannot see things in the same light. People are vexed at what they please to term my obstinacy; and I am fretted out of all patience by their tiresome, prosing opposition. When I say a foolish thing at random, *they* retort upon it with severity. This puts me in a fury, and serves as an excuse for the vilest opinion of me."

"But you do not pretend to say that *I* have a *vile* opinion of you," replied Lady Rochford, in answer to her brother's pettish remarks. "On

the contrary, I believe—nay, I am *quite sure*, that you are governed by the most honourable motives as regards this affair. It is for a mere error of judgment that I condemn you, and it is too natural to surprise me; but, as I said before, Bertha is not herself just now, therefore it is not Bertha's genuine wishes that you would follow. Take my word for it, that her first awakening recollections (if she does remember the past) will be a grateful perception of your delicate conduct. Leave to me the task of counsellor and friend. I know by experience how to deal with a diseased mind;”—and the countess heaved a sigh to the memory of her unfortunate friend in the convent at Villanora.

As she spoke, Lord Fontayne sat writhing in all the agony of incertitude. Once or twice he attempted to interrupt her last sentence, then put a violent constraint upon his inclinations, bit his lip, and paced across the room with a continuity of restless and disordered motion. At one time he appeared to be convinced by her arguments, and, in the next moment, grew impatient of contradiction. All at once, with a sullen, dogged air, he announced his determination to go.

The countess was confounded; she expostulated warmly. Evelyn attempted to explain; but his voice choked, he gasped for breath, and

sank into a seat in strong convulsions. Isidora, alarmed and distressed beyond measure, ran for assistance; but, with a violent effort, Evelyn arrested the movement.

“Stay!” cried he, in a hollow voice; “it is but for a moment!”—and he grappled with the attack, as a sorcerer may be supposed to do with his tutelar demon.

Lady Rochford watched, with deep interest, mingled with curiosity, the varying expression which flitted over the countenance of her brother. In a few minutes these perturbed messengers were succeeded by a deep and settled calm. He flung himself upon the couch in a state of exhaustion, apparently unmindful of her presence; and she was gently stealing out of the room, when Evelyn called her back.

“I have hurried you, Isidora,” said he, faintly; “but it was impossible to controul my feelings—nay, it was the sudden effort to do so which brought on this paroxysm. Judge, then, how much I suffer, when I give you my solemn word and honour that I will never see Bertha more! I cannot account for the influence she possesses over me, since I was certainly well disposed to like another woman before I received this cursed letter. How it is, Heaven knows! Perhaps it is from her being my first love. Now, if I thought,”

continued he, raising himself up in a reflective posture, “that Bertha really dictated that letter, I would put consequences out of the question, and fly to her this moment, sooner than leave her to draw reproachful inferences from my ungenerous silence. Laying aside our early acquaintance and relative connexion—viewing the matter in the serious light you do, Isidora—one should yet act with greater feeling than caution towards a virtuous woman, who has been tempted to commit herself for the first and only time.”

Tears rushed into the eloquent eyes of the warm-hearted Isidora at these words.

“Dearest brother!—noblest of men!” cried she, “you are a hero, in the truest sense of the word; for you have gained a victory without bloodshed! Evelyn de la Fontayne more than emulates the deeds of his forefathers—he out-rivals them.”

“Softly, sweet enthusiast!” said Evelyn, placing his hand across his sister’s mouth. “Remember that I am but a coward at best, and only conquer by flight. What would John of Bury St. Edmunds have said to that?”

“That you fought like the Parthians of old.”

“True,” returned he; “and it was a perilous enterprise, Isidora, considering what a host of passions were in the rear.”

“ Your contest, my dear brother,” replied Isidora, solemnly, “ has been with spiritual adversaries, and the weapons of such a warfare are not carnal ;” and the countess, as she crossed herself, involuntarily turned towards a beautiful picture of the Virgin and Child, which hung over her dressing-table.

“ Isidora,” cried Evelyn, “ I am not quite a hero yet ; though my reason tells me you are right, it goes against my perverse nature to thank you for your interference. I know you are my best friend, but you must be content to *wait* for my gratitude.”

“ Any time you please, my dear Evelyn,” said she ; “ the consciousness of having done you a real service will make ample amends for my self-denial : believe me, it is a serious pain to thwart you.”

“ I know it, Isidora, and therefore it is that you have more influence with me than any other person ; but if I have the magnanimity to swallow your nauseous draught, don’t deny me the satisfaction of making wry faces. One can’t, however,” continued he, kissing his sister’s cheek as he spoke, “ take the prescription without feeing the physician.”

“ Adieu, for the present,” said the affectionate Isidora, returning the salute ; “ I leave you to the blessing of repose and solitary reflection,

which I feel assured will forward the cure I have undertaken."

"Wait a moment, Isidora," said Lord Fontayne, "and I will tell you what it was which gave the preponderating weight to your arguments. I believe, to speak honestly, I should have persisted in my opposition if a thought had not suddenly, nay, almost miraculously darted across my mind, and given a violent check to my intentions. You may remember my once naming, in my letters to you, a married woman, who seemed to have wormed herself into the confidence of Bertha, although report gave her credit for more genuine and liberal regards towards Courtenay. I did not like her at first sight, and my disgust increased during the course of that memorable evening."

"But what of Mrs. Norberry?" inquired Lady Rochford.

"Well, you shall hear," returned Evelyn. "After I had decided upon what I fairly own was a wrong course of action, it struck me this letter might be only a part of that infernal woman's machinations, for I am convinced she is at the bottom of all Bertha's unhappiness. The look of malice, the furtive, almost imperceptible glance, which this fiend in human shape stole towards Courtenay as I embraced his in-

fant child, all glanced to my mind in an instant. No!" cried Evelyn, with increasing warmth, "she shall not triumph over her unfortunate victim through my instrumentality. Cost me what it may, Isidora, Bertha shall remain a wronged, but blameless wife. I have, as you well say, loved her too ardently, too sincerely, to be an unmoved witness of her sufferings; yet could I never bear to think of her under any other light than that in which she has always appeared to my imagination. No! Isidora, no! neither angel nor demon shall henceforth have power to shake my resolves. Never shall one act of mine erase that pure, that exalted idea, which is associated with her image."

The subject was never afterwards resumed between brother and sister, yet the melancholy fate of his early love threw a damp upon Evelyn's spirits. Lady Rochford proposed a visit into Surrey.

"I can't go there, at present," replied Evelyn, peevishly; "Lucy Temple, and your receipt for mending my shattered fortunes, sticks in my throat. A plague on all women! if once I get my head into the matrimonial noose, don't I know that a parcel of you will give it a jerk round my neck in a moment? No—I will tell you what I mean to do; I intend going on a tour of duty

as well as inclination, being bound on a pilgrimage to a certain *protégée* of my mother's, Rose Dunmore by name, and by nature one of the kindest, and most harmless of your tormenting species. I have not seen her for years, but trust she is in the land of the living ; and, if so, I will lay my life for it, the faithful Rose is as well disposed towards me as ever."

"Without doubt," replied the countess, rather satirically, "she lives in hopes that you have not forgotten her." Lord Fontayne stared at his sister, as if to read her latent meaning in her countenance. "Miss Dunmore," said he, gravely, "is a kinswoman of ours, though a distant one, and was my mother's favourite. Did you not know this before, Isidora?"

"I remember hearing you talk of her a deal on our first acquaintance," replied the countess, hesitatingly, "but I didn't know that—"

"Know what?" cried Evelyn, laughing. "For my part I only know that I have a most fraternal regard for poor Rose, whom I have too long neglected. As to an interest of a tenderer nature, my dear sister, our difference of age and rank present impediments, which the scrupulous mind of the warm-hearted Rose would never overcome, even had I professed such a sentiment towards her, which I never dreamt of."

“ I am glad to hear you say so,” returned Lady Rochford.

“ And why so, Isidora ?” cried Evelyn ; “ the love of such a woman would be no mean gift ; and Rose must have thought so too, or she would ere this have taken up with the waifs and strays chance has thrown in her way. Rose is devoted to my interests, is well versed in the chronicles of our family, and, like yourself, Isidora, has all the qualities of staunch fidelity and firmly rooted adherence to their cause. Rose was to me, in my early days, a sort of guardian saint, or attendant oracle—something like the Minerva of the French archbishop, who follows the footsteps of the wandering son of Ulysses. You cannot understand my allusion, Isidora, because this excellent work is not suffered to go abroad. It is a disgrace to the French government that a work which inculcates the most exalted piety, the purest morality, and the most enlarged sentiments, should be considered a libel upon it ! But to return to Rose, who used to treat me and my vagaries with exemplary patience. As she was timid, and I had all the petulance of a spoiled child, a doubtful argument was always decided in my favour. I liked Rose as much as I hated her friend Edith Courtenay ; the one never contradicted me, and the other made a point of doing

so on all occasions ; besides, Edith was the sister of my successful rival, and I was a proud, shy, wayward, and romantic youth. With all her mildness," continued Lord Fontayne, " Rose had a drop of the Fontayne blood in her : she was proud and sensitive to the extreme on some occasions ; too wise not to prefer the moderate indulgences of her own quiet house to the luxuries which must have been purchased by the loss of independence, she had, nevertheless, an unfortunate taste for things beyond her own narrow sphere ; I don't mean the common matters of eating and drinking, and wearing apparel, and so forth : she was simple and frugal in her habits, but her ambition extended to points of taste and sentiment. Rose had her faults, but they were too much like my own to be quarrelled with ; a want of feeling or generosity was not amongst the number."

" This Miss Dunmore," said the countess, as her brother concluded his remarks, " must be a most fascinating personage to call forth such a spirited eulogium from a professed woman-hater."

" I !" exclaimed Lord Fontayne, in surprise, " I—a woman-hater?—God knows I love the soft deceivers only *too well!*"

" And despise them in the same breath," replied his sister ; " that is an inexplicable paradox

to me, Evelyn. We must be a most unhappy race of beings, to provoke all the contumely which is poured forth upon our devoted heads. Dear brother! why will you condescend to retail all the calumny which issues from unlawful sources? wherefore pour the vials of your unrighteous wrath indiscriminately upon the innocent and the guilty? Some of Heaven's choicest blessings may come to you in this questionable shape, and woman may be, to you, the city of refuge after all your wanderings."

"Go along with you, syren!" cried Evelyn, gently drawing his sister to the door. "You have as potent a spell as the water-nymph in 'Comus,' unchaining one's freezing sympathies by an irresistible magic. Why did I say I could not bear contradiction? You are perpetually thwarting me, yet I continue to hug my slavish chains;" and Evelyn, at the same time, inflicted a rather ungentle embrace upon the laughing countess.

CHAPTER XV.

Thou hast deserved of me
Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.
Oft have I proved the labours of thy love.

BLAIR.

Slight withal may be the things which bring
Back on the heart the weight which it would fling
Aside for ever.—It may be a sound—
A tone of music—summer's eve, or spring,
A flower—the wind—the ocean, which shall wound,
Striking the electric chain wherewith we're darkly bound

CHILDE HAROLDE.

THE appearance of a smartly-accoutréed and handsome cavalier with an attendant groom at the gates of the old family mansion of the Blagdons on the borders of Westmoreland, created no small surprise to its secluded inhabitants. The sensation, indeed, was not without interest of a peculiar kind to the female part of the household, who impatiently

watched his arrival through the formal avenue of straggling pines which led to the house. The occupant was the only surviving near relative of Miss Dunmore: she was an ancient maiden lady of retired habits and rigid manners, to whose care Rose had been consigned since the death of her mother and widowed aunt. The bell of the large iron gates was echoed by the quick furious barking of a chained mastiff in the court, re-echoed by the faint yelpings of some half dozen of domestic favourites from the interior. An antique-looking, venerable porter, cautiously opened the door, and measuring his steps with mechanical regularity, so as to take no more than one at a time of the diamond flag-stones of the court, deliberately unlocked the gates, making a profound obeisance at sight of the visitor. In answer to Lord Fontayne's inquiries, the sedate old man replied that Mistress Rose was at home, tending the old lady. "Madam," he observed, as they walked up the court, "kept up pretty well for her years, which was more than threescore and ten, being born in the same year with his most gracious majesty Charles the First, of blessed memory."

Evelyn followed his guide through a massive door, thickly studded with nails, and grating upon its rusty hinges, into a lofty spacious hall, hung

with faded tapestry representing the memorable history of 'Patient Grizzel.' For this information he was indebted to the old man, who pointed out to him the different stages of the narrative, which embraced three compartments of the hall, "beginning," as old Jacob observed, "at the door, and ending at the fire-place." As Lord Fontayne was gazing, with some curiosity, on the various groups of uncouth figures habited in the French costume of the twelfth century, a singular phenomenon presented itself in the pictorial scene. The grim features of the bridegroom marquis became grotesquely animated by a pair of sparkling black eyes, peering at him with looks of unqualified admiration. He was going to direct the attention of old Jacob to this miraculous vision, when a tremulous movement of the arras, and the loud voice of the major-domo sternly reproving the unseen magician, led him to conjecture that some part of the female household had contrived this ingenious device to satisfy their curiosity.

"Ne'er a stranger crosses this threshold once a twelvemonth," cried the old man, who seemed to think it necessary to apologise for such an unceremonious intrusion of human optics; "and the wenches are downright wild at the sight of a man;

specially if he be young and comely, like," added he, courteously.

Lord Fontayne, whose late years had been spent amongst such different scenes, was highly amused at such a primitive state of society. The sound of his deep-toned voice seemed even to startle old Jacob, and the very curs, drowsily basking on the expansive hearth, growled out a few angry tones of defiance at their unwonted proximity to a stranger. As they were leaving the hall, Evelyn gave a look upwards at the ballustrades of carved oak which formed an enclosure to a gallery which overlooked the hall. His quick eye instantly caught a glimpse of a female figure passing along with aerial swiftness. It was Rose herself, who, hastily running down the staircase, saluted him with a hearty welcome.

"I will attend to Lord Fontayne myself," said Rose, dismissing old Jacob. The latter personage returned the hint with a gape of astonishment, and repaired to the kitchen to communicate the important news that a grand lord was come a courting to the young mistress; a fact which the steward affirmed as most certainly true, seeing that the young gentleman did salute Mistress Rose on the tips of her fingers, which was a law-

ful and goodly custom in his day with those couples who were betrothed.

“ So I have found you out at last,” said Evelyn, as he followed Rose into a sort of oriel ; “ and how can you exist in this dreary place ? ” said he, looking out of the window which opened into a walled enclosure, laid out in the formal and uncouth style of the preceding century. “ I should be moped to death at the sight of those dark walnut-trees, and the eternal sameness of your architectural pleasure-grounds.”

“ But your lordship forgets,” replied Rose, smiling, “ that I have had the legend of ‘ Patient Grizzel ’ to support my spirits, and my feeble attempts to copy that much-enduring dame have been crowned with a rich, though late reward, since a gallant knight like yourself, in the true spirit of ancient chivalry, has penetrated these rude borders.”

“ You give me credit for too much knight-errantry, I fear,” returned Lord Fontayne ; “ I am not coming to carry you off, Rose : to tell you the truth, I should not know where to put you if I had you. The old priory, your favourite spot, to be sure, is at liberty ; but I fear we should be forcibly ejected by a colony of rats who have succeeded to the late tenant. Indeed I had hoped,” continued he, looking archly from under his eye-

lashes, “ that some *preux chevalier* would have spared me the trouble ages ago.”

Miss Dunmore slightly coloured, and the effect produced by her fleeting blush led Evelyn to notice that time had increased the natural palleness of her countenance.

“ I have a message for you from my sister,” said Lord Fontayne, playfully and delicately turning the subject ; “ Isidora longs to be acquainted with you, and a change of scene would do you good.”

Rose returned a gracious answer to this compliment. She was surprised and fascinated by the courtly address and elegant manners of Lord Fontayne, so very superior to what they had ever appeared in former days, even in those occasional moments of excitement, when he put forth all his latent powers of pleasing. As she listened to a detail of past events, old associations were revived, with fresh vigour, in the mind of Rose, and which, blended with impressions of a novel kind at the altered person and manners of Evelyn, affected her even to sadness. Evelyn, who, amidst his increased lightness of spirits, could yet participate in the gloom which certain feelings cast over a sensitive mind, was touched with her melancholy, and grew insensibly silent and abstracted, watching, with interest, the coursing

tears which followed each other swiftly down the cheek of Rose, in spite of her utmost efforts to controul them.

“ How strangely,” thought he, “ are events disposed of in this perverse world ! Here is a woman with too much feeling by half for the dull atmosphere she breathes. Not one person in a thousand could comprehend her, and still fewer have sense enough to appreciate her.”

Miss Dunmore interrupted Lord Fontayne’s brief reverie by observing that she must go and announce his arrival to her aunt.

“ It would shock her ideas of propriety,” she observed, “ were she to learn that I am holding a private conversation with one of your sex.”

Rose left the room, promising to return in ten minutes. The ten minutes increased to, at least, half an hour before she again made her appearance.

“ I have been away longer than I intended,” said she, on her return ; “ but a maiden lady’s toilet is a tedious concern ; and, in this instance,” continued she, smiling, “ I begin to suspect that my revered kinswoman is bent on a conquest.”

Rose ushered Evelyn through a long space of gallery into an apartment of considerable size, the upper part of which was hung with tapestry, whilst the lower department was lined with cedar,

the faint perfume of which, added to the complete exclusion of air from every possible aperture, made it at once sickly and oppressive. Open-mouthed cherubims, *en voile*, occupied the four corners of the ceiling ; and the mantel-piece, of choicest Parian marble, was surmounted by a pompous display of heraldic blazonry, representing the arms of the ancient and respectable family of the Blagdons, with the several quarterings thereto introduced, in consequence of the marriage of Sir Nicholas of that name with three several heiresses. The ponderous chairs were embellished with covers of flowered damask ; whilst, on an elevated seat at the upper end of the room, propped up with cushions, sat the last and female representative of the family.

The old lady made a formal attempt to rise as Evelyn entered, but was unwillingly compelled to keep her seat at the earnest request of the courteous young nobleman. The action, however, discomposed her drapery, and suggested the necessary duty of shaking her Mechlin ruffles, and smoothing down her snow-white apron.

“ I am truly proud,” she exclaimed, “ to receive under my humble roof the descendant of that Richard Baron de la Fontayne, who, with his noble brothers, fought manfully for the rights of our martyred sovereign against a foul and bloody

usurper! Your lordship is right welcome to Blagdon Hall."

This formal harangue, and the consequential manner in which it was delivered, formed such a contrast to the diminutive stature and puny features of the speaker, that Evelyn, who had an unfortunately quick sense of the ludicrous, had some difficulty to command his countenance. Recovering himself, after a slight effort, with a graceful obeisance, (which the good lady afterwards observed to Rose approached more nearly to the politeness of the old regime than any thing she had seen for years,) Lord Fontayne delivered an extemporaneous reply in a style yet more inflated. Rose, confounded by the ready wit and unembarrassed manners of her travelled acquaintance, trembled lest Evelyn's humour should get the better of his discretion and betray the jest.

No suspicion of the kind was, however, awakened in the bosom of Mistress Sarah Blagdon, who, unconscious of the satire she had provoked, thought herself a perfect oracle, and Lord Fontayne second best. Her peering, insignificant-looking faded orbs brightened up into an expression of strong approbation; and Evelyn was at once secretly pronounced to be a "most well-mannered young gentleman, altogether unlike the travelled, parrot-tongued youth of the day."

Evelyn, who had a quick insight into character, soon learnt to humour the prejudices of the old lady, and played her off unmercifully. He abused every nation under the sun but his own, and wondered how any body of sense could live an hour out of old England. He discoursed, with eloquent indignation, about the corrupt atmosphere of France and Italy—quarrelled with the Turks for being Mahomedans, and harbouring that pestilential race, the descendants of Abraham—abused the Greek ladies for not wearing stiff stays or high-heeled shoes—and finally concluded with an eulogium upon his own countrywomen.

Mine hostess was delighted with her noble guest, and loaded him with every possible mark of approbation.

On rainy Sundays, “Madam” (as she was called by her servants and tenantry) was in the habit of drawing together, at morning and evening prayers, a small congregation, consisting of her own household, the “stranger that was within her gate,” and such devout and sober persons as lived at a formidable distance. This pious ceremony (now unjustly exploded) was performed in an oratory fitted up for the purpose, the walls of which were, also, covered with tapestry, representing the confession of the apostle Paul before King Agrippa.

The cover to the old family Bible, the cushion on which it rested, and the decorations of the benches outside the railing, were all the handi-craft of “madam” in her youthful days. On each side of the temporary altar was a seat of considerable elevation, appropriated to the use of the mistress of the mansion and an occasional visitor of honour. To this post of distinction Evelyn was unwillingly promoted; for, like all the favourites of fortune, he had good reason to fear that corresponding cares were attached to his new dignities; and so it proved. Lord Fontayne, step by step, in the most natural and insinuating manner possible, found himself by degrees raised from assistant oracle into a regular officiating chaplain. The full tones of his fine manly voice gave increased solemnity to the service; and Rose, who was not the least attentive of his serious auditory—poor Rose! *she* even found it an effort to raise her thoughts from earth to heaven, as she recalled a voice, to which Lord Fontayne’s now bore some affinity!

Lord Fontayne passed two or three weeks very agreeably in the solitude and silence of Blagdon Hall. There was a choice collection of good old authors in the library; fishponds, and fish in undisturbed and profuse variety, with preserved enclosures of great extent; so that Evelyn never

wanted amusement, either in-doors or out. Once or twice, Miss Dunmore, under the strict *surveillance* of the old steward, was allowed to accompany him in his more extensive rides ; but the equestrian talents of Rose and her noble relative were too much for poor old Jacob, who declared, on his return, that “ the young mistress followed my lord as if it had been an angel after Lucifer ; that in good sooth, she might gang to the devil end-a-ways before his old bones should get another such shaking in running after her.” These observations, couched in the true north country dialect, reached the ears of his mistress, who, after a due reprimand to her niece upon the indelicacy and imprudence of riding beyond a snail’s gallop, put an interdict upon all future excursions, to the no small regret of both parties. From this time Lord Fontayne was left to his own resources, and these, for a certain time, were agreeable enough. He would spend many a listless hour in ranging over the finely-wooded park, thickly studded with oaks of a century’s growth, or in rambling through the ruins of an ancient castle, the crumbling towers of which were covered with luxuriant ivy, creeping through the unglazed windows, and filling up each shattered crevice.

On fine moonlight evenings this ruin was seen

to great advantage. It stood on the brow of a smooth-shaven hill, commanding an extensive view of the rich valley beneath; the beams of the full moon darting through the deepened foliage of the umbrageous trees in the back-ground; their lengthened shadows upon the greensward; the cattle sprinkled at unequal distances on the open hills; the curling smoke from the neighbouring hamlet; the lofty fragments of the castle itself; its detached portions filled up by dark masses of ivy, whose thick gnarled and tenacious stems were the spontaneous growth of nature; the flitting beams glancing through the ruined towers, with now and then the distant sound of a prowling watch-dog; the hoarse croaking of a solitary night bird, or the flapping of the loose ivy against the crumbling stones, heard at solemn intervals of dreary silence.

All these truly picturesque sights and sounds were congenial with the spirit of Evelyn. They formed the mental atmosphere he had breathed from his youth, and the localities of his own country derived a new and improved charm from his long absence abroad.

“England,” thought he, “has its points of interest as well as other countries. If it has not the cloudless sky of Italy, it has less of the sameness that wearies, the luxury which enervates,

If its climate be less temperate than the south, its change of seasons affords a more pleasing variety of contrast ; and where is there a people upon the whole earth whose internal resources are so numerous and independent as those of the free-born sons of the sea-girt isle ?”

But an active mind like Lord Fontayne’s was not doomed to expend its energies upon moonlight ramblings. He began to languish for society, and made preparations for his return to Offham Park.

“ I don’t know why I should ask you to stay,” said Rose, at the conclusion of her warm and pressing entreaty to continue his visit a week longer ; “ you must be tired already, Evelyn, of two women, one very old, and the *other* not very young.”

“ Will you not accuse me of flattery,” dear Rose, exclaimed he, “ if I say in return for your modest speech, that I should be never weary of your society ? In truth, my good cousin, you have given me no chance of trying the experiment, for I have had precious little of it since I came into these parts ; positively, we have not had half an hour’s uninterrupted conversation. With all due gratitude towards your venerable kinswoman, I must decline her proffered favours ; absolutely I can bear them no longer. Another week would fairly

spoil my manners, and lose me the honour of a first-rate opinion."

Miss Dunmore urged him no farther, and all parties separated with expressions of mutual kindness and regret; the old lady even shedding tears at bidding, as she termed it, an eternal adieu to her amiable visitor.

"I shall never see your lordship any more in the land of the living," said she, grasping his hand with unaffected emotion; "but take an old woman's advice, leave off this roving life; settle in your own country; choose a virtuous helpmate, who may assist you in performing the duties incumbent on your rank and station, and determine, by the grace of God, to be useful in your day and generation."

Evelyn, on his return from the north, gave his sister an amusing history of his visit. "I was crammed," said he, "from morning till night like a stalled ox, or a Christmas turkey. Mine hostess thought I could never eat nor drink enough. My bed was of the largest dimensions, with furniture of the most luxurious kind; and, though I had nothing in the world to do, but to take my ease, the good lady thought it necessary to provoke my slumbers by the addition of eider-down pillows. Rose, whom I had been used to look up to as a full-grown woman when I was but a raw youth,

to my great surprise, appeared neither old nor wrinkled ; but a little paler, and rather more formal in her manners ; which latter circumstance is to be accounted for by the continual restraint she suffers from the watchful vigilance of her grand-aunt. This antiquated piece of virginity is for ever levying contributions on the patience and forbearance of her poor niece. Rose was high-priestess in the mysterious labours, and delicate tactics of a vain old woman's toilet, and a better walking-stick up and down the long gallery than her gold-tipped cane, which she always wore as a badge of distinction. There was no chance of stealing five minutes' converse with Rose, for the old lady was up first in the house, hobbling about, and prying into every nook and corner, or tinkling her little silver bell with an eternal ' Rose, Rose, my child, where have you been all this time ? ' *She*, poor thing ! though no longer a child in the eye of the law, was such to all intents and purposes in the eye of her careful guardian. She was tutored, and lectured, and tasked from one day to another. Rose has naturally an impatient spirit, which will not even bend to her own interest ; besides, I knew the Blagdon estate was entailed upon a nearer lineal descendant ; so, how to account for her unwearied complaisance puzzled

me, till I asked her one day what made her endure such cruel bondage.

“ ‘O ! we get on better,’ said she, ‘ when left to ourselves. My aunt is consequential, and fond of exercising her authority before strangers ; and wherefore not,’ continued my dutiful and exemplary cousin, ‘ yield to her innocent foibles, since, by the appointment of Heaven, it has become my allotted task to sooth the declining years ? She has been a mother towards me, since the death of my own. I ‘eat of her bread, and drink of her cup,’ and, in the language of Scripture, ‘am unto her as a daughter.’ Here lay the grand secret ; Rose is the soul of feeling, and the old lady, who has an excellent heart, makes quite a pet of her.”

“ And, now, my dear brother,” inquired Lady Rochford at the conclusion of his story, “ whither do you next direct your wandering steps ? A dispatch has arrived during your absence, which may serve to fix your wavering resolutions. Report says,” added the countess, producing a letter, “ that your friend Sir William Temple is dangerously ill.”

Evelyn seized the letter with avidity, and, after perusing it, returned it to his sister.

“ Rumour says true unfortunately in this instance, my dear sister ; Sir William wishes to see

me, and I must lose no time in setting off.—Poor Lucy!"

"She will need a comforter," thought Isidora, but she wisely refrained from giving utterance to the thought, and saw her brother depart in silence.

Lord Fontayne, on his arrival at his friend's house, found him labouring under an alarming disorder; but, gratefully sensible of his prompt attentions, Lucy, the tender, the gentle Lucy, between smiles and tears, scarcely knew how to thank him; yet Evelyn was, nevertheless, flattered by her efforts.

The long and tedious illness of her uncle necessarily threw her much in Lord Fontayne's way, and tended to familiarise them with each other more than years of formal intercourse. At the close of a month's *séjour* in Surrey, Evelyn wrote thus:—

Dear Isidora,

Sir William is at length slowly recovering. Lucy and myself have been coadjutors in the laudable task of nursing. At the near prospect of her uncle's death, the dear girl was, as you may conceive, almost inconsolable. One must have been an insensate to witness her distress, and not attempt to alleviate it in every possible way.

She is an incomparably elegant creature, Isidora—chaste enough to satisfy the most fastidious critic, with feeling enough to prove that her occasional reserve is the result of instinctive delicacy, rather than constitutional coldness. She is nature itself, but it is the nature of good and virtuous impulses. Lucy would make an excellent wife; but not for me, Isidora, I am not good enough for her; besides, how do I know that she would have me? She must be very particular, else why did she not marry before? Pooh! why do I ask the question? Where could such a woman meet with her deserts in the conjugal yoke? 'Tis a dreadful risk for you, poor souls! 'twere better, methinks, to nurse monkeys and cats. By the by, Isidora, have you heard any thing lately about Bertha? Never fear telling me; I grieve for her, but I know there is no remedy against the ills of fate, but patience and resignation:—*à propos* of fate, Isidora; I begin to be of your opinion, and really have taken it into my head that I am ordained to marry.

I want an anodyne to still my restless feelings. My only fear is that matrimony would prove a soporific instead of a febrifuge. Lucy is fixing her dove-like eyes upon me this moment, as if she could read my musings. I see her through the interstices of my fingers, and my ear has caught a

half-smothered sigh. Do you think it possible she could like me, Isidora?—not like me only, but positively *love* me to distraction? No less powerful a sentiment could induce a woman to put up with all my vagaries, or use those persevering measures which would chain my wandering heart. Now Lucy has nothing violent or extravagant about her; and, perhaps, when I come to think of it, her sort of character is more adapted to mine. Violent sensations soon wear out, and I have always found, in your sex, that the deepest and most intense feelings are concealed under a calm, nay, frequently an apathetic exterior. But I must not be loved by rule, neither, Isidora, and as a matter of duty. This is what I fear from Lucy's well-regulated mind.

After this description of his situation, Lady Rochford was fully prepared for a *dénouement* which would have enabled her to claim Lucy Temple as a sister. In answer to her inquiries upon this subject, Evelyn confessed the deep interest she had inspired, but avowed his unwillingness to marry for what might be considered a lucrative connexion.

“ You are more nice than wise,” said the countess, with some displeasure; “ when will you learn to consult your own happiness? and as for

poor Lucy, it is too clear that you are trifling with her affections. She loves you I am convinced."

Evelyn grew pensive at these words ; the name of Lucy Temple seemed to put him into a bad humour every time it passed his sister's lips. He grew melancholy, and two months wore away in secret disquietude on his part, and silent disapprobation on that of Lady Rochford. At the end of that time, Evelyn told his sister that he was going to take his final departure.

" If you mean to visit Sheen, again," returned she, " I hope it is for some specific purpose, or I shall utter my protest against it."

" Time will show," cried Evelyn.

" And is that *all*?" said she, reproachfully.

" Is not ' all well which *ends* well ? ' " cried Evelyn, playfully. " Do not your sex provoke mystery by your insatiable curiosity—eh, Isidora? Be content, and take this peace-offering," thrusting into her hands a deed of some value ; " and now, gentle sister, give me your blessing, and bid me good speed ; since, if your suspicions are true," added he, smiling, " I go on an errand of mercy."

Lady Rochford, touched by remorse for her late severity, and overcome by a variety of emotions, wept upon her brother's shoulder as she faltered out her prayers for his happiness.

" I know not what I ought to wish for you,

dearest Evelyn," said she in broken words. "God grant that all may be ordered for the best! you have a sister's fondest, warmest prayers."

Evelyn embraced her tenderly, and whispering his intended mission in her ear, went in search of his noble host, and most worthy relative, under whose hospitable roof he had so long taken shelter.

CHAPTER XVI.

Now tell me, brother Clarence, what think you
Of this new marriage with the Lady Grey?
Hath not our brother made a worthy choice?

HENRY THE SIXTH.

LORD FONTAYNE had left Blagdon Hall six months, when Rose Dunmore, to her great surprise, received the following letter:—

Sheen, 1691.

DEAR ROSE,

Congratulate me on my conquest over the evil rulers of my destiny. The unities are no longer violated in my dramatic career, and a life which seemed fated to be a jumble of odds and ends—a mixture of heroic enterprise and cowardly retreat, is in a fair way to be wrought up into a regular hymeneal catastrophe! I am going to be married, Rose! actually married!—not to the woman I loved in the first instance, but to one who has loved me—

ay, for many a long year! “Simple fool, not to find it out before now!” you will say:—*n’importe*—it has enhanced the value of the discovery. O that you could see the dear, generous creature who has kindly taken pity on me! She is an angel of goodness, though a very woman in feeling. How she must have suffered by my stupid insensibility! Can I ever make her amends, think you, even though I should live to the age of Methuselah? Laugh at my romance as much as you please, Rose: fancy that “by love, the young and tender wit is turned to folly;” but you cannot, in justice to my Lucy’s gentle influence, say that “all the fair effects of future hopes” are fled *also*. I foresee that I shall turn out a most submissive husband.—No matter, Lucy Temple was never formed to be a domestic tyrant. Her fortune is considerable, but she has never given it a thought till now; and, when I deemed it my duty to lay before her all my embarrassments, what do you think was her answer?

“That she wished her fortune was ten times larger, for my sake!” A noble-minded creature!

She knows, too, of my former, as I fancied, unconquerable attachment, and she has shed a tear over the sorrows of Bertha (I can now write that name without trembling, yet I retain a tender interest in her welfare). Lucy knows all my

faults—practical ones, I mean ; I leave her to find out the rest at her leisure. She looked grave at some things, and at the conclusion returned me this memorable answer : “ I do not expect perfection, my dear Evelyn, in the man I marry ; but I have always adhered to the resolution of never choosing, as a companion for life, a man of decidedly immoral habits. Such an one would always look upon a wife in the light of a spy, and render abortive all her honest endeavours for his advancement in virtue, by his captious jealousy of her influence. But your case, my dear Evelyn, is widely different. Errors originating in a peculiar state of character, or arising out of strong temptation, I can easily overlook. Where there is true nobility of mind, a correct taste, and a conscientious feeling, these will not prove incurable diseases.”

What could I say to all this, Rose ? Nothing equal to its deserts ; yet the dear orator was not displeased at my silent gratitude. I have sent down into —— shire, to have the old abbey put into decent condition. It is mine and *my* Lucy’s earnest wish that you should meet us there ; so, pray say all that is civil to your good relative from me, and put our joint request in the most flattering form imaginable. My head is in a whirl of glorious anticipation, Rose. I have a

thousand plans in my head. I mean to follow Rochford's example, and live upon my own estate ; to have a flourishing, happy tenantry around me ; to cultivate the *useful* and *liberal* as well as the elegant arts of life ; and, will you believe it, Rose ? I mean to establish an oratory, like that at Blagdon Hall, for the spiritual benefit of myself and my future well-regulated household. I found the duty irksome at first, but have always preserved a reverential regard towards it. Fare-thee-well, sweet Rose ! Accept the best wishes of thy, at this moment, happy

EVELYN DE LA FONTAYNE.

The preparations at Norman Abbey for the reception of Lord Fontayne and his fair bride were soon completed, as he intended to superintend personally all improvements on a more extended scale. There was, at first, some difficulty in finding a suitable person to place at the head of the establishment. Mistress Margery, whose vile temper and imperious manners had cut short the thread of her poor husband's life, put in her widowed claims for the vacant office. Lord Fontayne, to whom she had been obnoxious from childhood, would not hear of such a proposal, and selected from a number of candidates his mother's former waiting-woman, who, with her husband, were

installed as domestic superintendents, with full power to regulate all minor arrangements. Every thing proceeded with alacrity—all hands went joyfully to work on this happy occasion ; and it was a day of proud triumph to Evelyn, as the carriage passed up the avenue, to see a crowd of smiling faces, from the aged patriarch of the hamlet to the child in its mother's arms—all catching the general infection, and welcoming him to the hall of his fathers, with loud acclamations of “ Long live the Fontaynes !—there never was a better name, be the other what it may !”

Lady Fontayne won the hearts of the good people by her graceful, affable, and benevolent courtesies. The village dames looked up at her, as she kindly thanked them for these expressions of good-will, and wondered at their own temerity. “ To be sure,” they observed, as an apology, “ she was a grand lady, and vastly pretty, but then she had no more pride nor a poor wench.”

Evelyn threw an eager glance upon the assembled household in search of a well-known face, but in vain ; no Mattie made her appearance. “ Perhaps she is offended that I didn't send for her,” thought he, “ and therefore will not come near the place.”

A distrustful silence followed his quick interrogatories. There was a feeling of moral injustice

in her case, which cast an indirect reproach upon their lord. They hesitated, as if unwilling to tell all they knew, looked ashamed for a fault which was not their own ; yet, amidst all their blunderings, contrived to give a too faithful and mortifying picture of the old housekeeper's situation. Evelyn was inexpressibly shocked. It was an unexpected and bitter alloy to his felicity. Even the claims of his bride, lovely and beloved as she was, were at this moment forgotten, as he rushed past her, and shut himself up in a distant apartment, to conceal his remorseful feelings at having so long overlooked the interests of an old and faithful servant. Lady Fontayne, who, unconscious of what was passing in her husband's mind, was gone in search of him, under an idea that he was seized with a sudden indisposition, listened to his self-accusations without interrupting him.

“ It is bad enough, my dear Evelyn, I acknowledge,” said she, when he had finished speaking, “ but it is not an irremediable case. You have still an opportunity of making ample reparation. Let us set about curing the malady instead of dwelling upon its malignity.”

“ Ah, my dear Lucy!” cried Evelyn, “ but prevention would have been better than the most skilful cure.”

“ Most certainly,” replied she ; “ but we may,

in some degree, atone for the neglect of the one by a prompt attention to the other; which is now, alas! all in our power. Let us go and see the poor dear creature to-morrow. We must not damp the joy of these good people by our unseasonable regrets."

" You are right, Lucy," cried her husband ; " next to correcting one's errors immediately, the most consoling thought is to have formed good resolutions. Thank Heaven!" added he, pressing her hand, " I have a ready prompter near me, or I would not delay the matter for an instant. ' Hell (so divines say) is paved with good resolutions !' "

" There may be some truth in the observation," replied Lady Fontayne ; " but it is a harsh saying, my dear Evelyn."

" So I think," returned Evelyn. " It cannot be consistent either with the wisdom or justice of Omnipotence to make use of the virtuous impulses of his creatures as materials for their everlasting punishment. I should rather imagine they were intended to carry us in a contrary direction."

" The practical virtues are more likely to meet us at the half-way house of a good resolution, according to my view of the subject," said Lady Fontayne ; " but I am not skilled in such dan-

gerous casuistry." So saying, she gently drew her husband away from the room.

The following day Evelyn and his Lucy set off on a private excursion to the cottage in which poor Mattie was placed. It was inhabited by a poor, dirty, wretched family, whose scanty earnings from agricultural pursuits were ekinged out by a weekly contribution from the parish. Under this forlorn roof, and amongst its vulgar inmates, she dragged out a miserable existence, supported by the same wretched pittance. Bowed down to the dust by the strong arm of poverty and the bitterness of consuming regrets, desolation and trouble came upon her soul like the wide breaking in of waters!

The long and dreary visitation of Heaven, added to want of proper food and careful nourishment, had thrown the poor old woman into a state of stupefaction, which, to superficial observers, bore the semblance of unmeaning mental induration; interrupted only by sharp, quick, and angry remonstrances at the "noisy brats," as she termed the ragged children, who, in running hastily from door to door, would heedlessly encroach upon the privacy of her solitary hearth.

Day by day, and year by year, she sat cowering over the handful of red embers which half-filled her comfortless grate, with little apparent

consciousness of what was passing around, or without any mechanical effort save that of silently and sullenly devouring the coarse meal which was prepared for her. The death of her son was the only circumstance which seemed to rouse her deadened faculties. She watched the ghastly, livid corse by night and by day, wept and wailed over the “unfortunate bairn,” and, after the body was taken out of the house, would, every now and then, look up from the ground, gaze about, as if in search of something that was missing, and groan heavily as her wandering recollection returned.

Lady Fontayne had lifted up the latch of the door and stood before her, ere poor Mattie, whose sight and hearing were both much impaired, had perceived her approach. The apparition of a tall figure in white robes dazzled and somewhat appalled her weak vision.

“ Gude Heaven, hae mercy upon me !” cried she, fixing her eye upon her with the look of one to whom strange sights and sounds can only be recognised as the airy forms of other days ; “ 'tis my leddy hersel, my ain winsome leddy !” then beckoning her away with her shrivelled long fingers, “ I 'm coming, my leddy ; ye ken weel eneugh I want nae bidding :—but ye 're blithely welcome the night. Whan the cock craws, the

morn is na far ahint ; I 'm passing weary o' this fashious warld. Wharfore suld I bide langer ? Andrew, puir saul ! 's gane, and we 'se hae nane to greet for the like o' us."

Lady Fontayne, perceiving there was some mistake, took hold of Mattie's hand as the most effectual way of dispelling the illusion. The sudden contact with warm flesh and blood startled her yet more. She grew bewildered and agitated, attempted to rise, as Evelyn advanced, and sank down again into her crazy chair, tottering and trembling with weakness.

" I mind now," said she, in a faint tone, endeavouring to appear collected, " ye 'll be some o' the strange gentles frae the abbey. I crave your honour's pardon, I didna ken ye at first; I 'm but a puir lane woman. Sit doun ; sit doun an' rest ye a wee bit ; I canna rise to mak' ye welcome, but I ken manners, my leddy : I kent manners ance," said she, impressively.

" Mattie," said Lord Fontayne, " do you not know me ?"

" Know your honour ?" returned she, " how suld that be ? nane o' the folks at the big house came here afore, an' I dinna gang out o' doors. Hech, sirs ! it 's a sair change ! but I am na free to speak ;" and she dropped her eyes upon the ground in vacant abstraction.

"Mattie," said Lady Fontayne, who pitied her husband's distress, "this is the young lord,—he, whom you used to call your bonny bairn when he first came from Scotland."

"The young lord?" exclaimed Mattie, incredulously. "Na, na, I am na sae daft neither, as not to ken my ain young lord. My een maun be clear gane if I dinna remember *him*. Na, na! Evelyn de la Fontayne hath passed awa like a' the lave o' his generation. Ohon! Death has a muckle sharp scythe; he crops mony a bonnie flower, and leaves the auld withered blade o' grass to be trampled under fute. Aweel! it's a judg-
ment, ye mind; whar the tree fa's, there it maun lie. But wha dunted it first?" said she, bitterly. "Speer me ane question, and I'll gie ye anither; not *me*, I trow, I gave bread to the hungry, and claes to the naked. What mair askit they? ay! mair than I suld hae granted; but the deed is dune" continued she in a stifled tone. "I sauld mysel to the evil ane, and he is come to torment me afore my time."

Evelyn, unaccustomed to the haunts of poverty or distress, was moved, even to tears, at sight of the misery which his own negligence had occasioned. The tender-hearted Lucy wept aloud, whilst the poor unconscious object of their emotion

gazed at them with an air of vacant surprise, more painful than the most cutting reproaches.

“ I am glad,” said Lord Fontayne, on their return home, “ that I have had sufficient resolution to seek my own punishment. Poor Mattie’s case will be a warning to me as long as I live. The wise man says, ‘ withhold not good whilst it is in the power of thine hand to do it.’ ”

“ But you *have* the power, my dear Evelyn,” said Lady Fontayne, willing to lessen the severity of the discipline he was undergoing ; “ the poor woman shall be removed here to-day.”

Orders were instantly given to this effect, and Mattie was put in possession of the apartment she had formerly occupied in the eastern wing of the priory. It was a matter which required great skill and care ; but, as Lady Fontayne herself assisted on the occasion, every thing was soon comfortably arranged for her reception, whilst a good-natured, active matron out of the village was engaged to wait upon her. The judicious management of Lady Fontayne anticipated every danger which might accrue in a too hasty transition from a scanty to a liberal diet. Her food was, at first, of the plainest kind, and administered in small quantities, till by degrees she was allowed a more nourishing and generous diet. Under this pru-

dent system, the poor old woman's strength gradually returned, and her faculties grew clearer every day; yet the gloomy past seemed mercifully veiled from her recollection. She would ask vague, incoherent questions of those around her, like a person awaking from a painful dream.

"I canna get it out o' my head," she would say to her attendant, "that I hae na seen my leddy's wraith just as she lookit at her bridal. I took it to be a death-warning; but my time is na yet come. Aweel! *He* kens best what is for the gude o' His sinfu' creatures. But whar's Andrew? the puir fallow! he's a sair plague!—Ohon! I've had a fashious time on't—a sair warstling wi' the evil ane. The de'il, ye mind, is o'er subtle, and kens weel eneugh how to bring ane's sins to remembrance."

One morning Mattie slept longer than usual, and awoke more composed and cheerful than she had ever been since her return to the abbey. She made no allusion to the past, but appeared to have forgotten that she had ever left. The sight of Lady Fontayne puzzled her; and, when Evelyn presented her as his wife, a shriek of delight escaped her.

"It's the gude spirit o' the house o' Fontayne!" cried she, a momentary flash of inspiration light-

ing up her withered features. “ I didna ken it afore.”

Lord Fontayne strictly forbad any remarks upon the past in the old woman’s hearing, and hailed this providential oblivion of thought as an omen of returning peace and tranquillity.

Mattie lived several quiet and pleasant years under the roof from whence she had been so unfortunately banished ; and the children of Evelyn had learned to lisp her name, as they climbed her aged knees, ere she was summoned, in a ripe old age, to the land of everlasting forgetfulness.

CONCLUSION.

Lord Fontayne spent the greatest part of his time in the bosom of his family. Naturally averse to polities, and shunning the violence of faction, he withdrew himself from both, and witnessed in silence the termination of the Popish ascendancy. His public life advanced no farther than the reign of William and Mary. The change of administration, which seemed to afford almost universal satisfaction, did not affect him with any pleasurable sensation.

“ I can never,” said he, “ view the accession of the House of Orange in the light others seem to do. To me, the utility of public acts appears doubtful when founded upon private injustice.”

Lady Fontayne's influence over her husband was as durable as it was gentle. She never boasted of it, nor even named the word before Evelyn, for she knew he hated it from early and disagreeable associations.

“Influence,” said he, “in the mouth of most persons is but a milder word for tyranny. Every body loves to rule—women in particular. An inordinate love of power is sure to be the ruin of its possessor. It begets a haughty, domineering spirit, which renders it an intolerable burden.”

Lady Fontayne was as far removed from such a temper as she was from the slightest propensity to manœuvring or artifice. Her watchful discretion was the offspring of the most devoted tenderness—of the purest and most disinterested love. It was open, generous, and confiding. She disdained to contest a point which could not be gained without having recourse to direct contradiction or indirect fraud ; and Evelyn, unlike too many husbands, never found himself obliged to look around him with suspicion lest certain points of female management should be the effect of a system silently and secretly undermining his independence. Lucy respected herself, by respecting the rights of her husband, and his good-natured compliance was never rewarded by an infringement of his legitimate rights. Whenever

she was congratulated on her conquest over so wayward a temper, she would reply, “you are mistaken in Evelyn’s true character. He is often hasty, but seldom unjust or unreasonable. I have only to wait till he cools, and reflection is sure to set him to rights. It is my pleasure to humour him ; why should I not bear with his little infirmities, since he is in most things so infinitely my superior ?”

Evelyn, on his part, was not insensible to the admirable and heroic temper of his wife, connected as it was with the deepest feeling.

“ Lucy has not an atom of selfishness about her,” he would say. “ I try her in a thousand ways, and, Heaven knows, *severely* too for the time ; but I should be a brute if I did not spare her forbearance as much as my nature will allow. Her generosity has curbed my self-will more than a thousand lectures would have done.” When Lady Fontayne was disposed to compliment her husband upon these occasions, he would answer with as much frankness—

“ I owe it all to you and your good uncle, Lucy ; the *one* put me in the right road, and the other has kept me there.”

“ Ah ! my dear husband,” cried she, with an air of serious tenderness, “ the dew of our benevolence fell upon good ground. The hidden germ,

by its fertility, has proclaimed the richness of the soil. It has brought forth fruit an hundred fold. Yet, in the midst of our prosperity, let us not rest upon second causes, nor fail to remember who it is which ‘sendeth the early and the latter rain, and giveth the appointed years of harvest.’ ”

Evelyn, as he pressed his Lucy to his bosom, wondered how he could ever have beheld her with indifference.

* * * *

Rose Dunmore was a favourite guest at Norman Abbey till the death of her aunt, and the more sudden decease of the male heir, by leaving her in full possession of the Blagdon estate, involved her in claims of a more important nature. The change in her circumstances, from a state of dependance to one of affluence, occasioned a corresponding alteration in the deportment of others. Rose was now as much courted as she had formerly been neglected, and numerous overtures in the way of love and friendship were made to her by persons who had formerly appeared ignorant of her very existence. Time had sharpened the penetration of Rose, and allowed her to estimate these professions as they deserved. Passing by these sunshine admirers, she magnanimously determined to devote her life, her talents, her property, her influence, in acts of piety and benevolence.

“ The day-dream of love is over,” sighed she ; “ yet what is life without affection ? I will instruct the ignorant, comfort the afflicted, relieve the destitute, and, by drawing around me the objects of my fostering bounty, I shall breathe a kindly atmosphere of love and good-will ; I shall live within a magic circle of grateful hearts !”

The early friendship of Rose Dunmore and Mrs. Sedley was soon afterwards renewed through the successful mediation of Lord Fontayne, at whose house they met, and who was the first to congratulate them on their re-union. It was not until Miss Dunmore’s third visit to Norman Abbey drew near a conclusion, that she was heard to lament the dulness and dreariness of her secluded castle in the north. Her friend Edith, with her usual address, failed not to communicate the accidental circumstance to a neighbouring gentleman of good birth, elegant tastes, and unblemished morals, who had long secretly loved and admired Rose, but whose moderate fortune had hitherto placed a barrier against his open addresses. On Mrs. Sedley’s “ hint, he spake,” was listened to with complacency by the generous-hearted Rose, and finally admitted as a coadjutor in her plans for repairing cottages, endowing almshouses, and reforming the county of Westmoreland, together with its adjacent borders.

Of Mrs. Courtenay and her husband little was known, as they lived chiefly abroad, their temporary disunion lasting no longer than the constancy of Mr. Courtenay's female friend. Evelyn lived to prove the truth of Lady Rochford's excellent advice, and, in the restoration of Bertha's domestic tranquillity, found the reward of an approving conscience doubly grateful. The tenderest regard subsisted between the wife and sister of Lord Fontayne, and, on the premature death of her husband, the countess became the purchaser of the manor and hall of Ravenstede.

Evelyn, with a natural thirst for glory and enterprise, exhibited the singular spectacle of a powerful mind, exerting, in the bosom of domestic privacy, energies and faculties, which, in more exciting times, would have called forth the proudest honours in the court, the field, and the senate.

His ambition, diverted from personal distinction by the want of an appropriate sphere, centred upon his children. Two of his sons afterwards attained the highest offices of the state; and even to this very day some one of his descendants, like certain irregular but beautiful productions of nature, arises to vindicate the fame and honour of the House of la Fontayne.

THE END.

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